



Victorian TAFE
Association Inc



Feasibility Study

EXPANDING POST SCHOOL EDUCATION PATHWAYS

Prepared for:
The Victorian Qualifications Authority

By:
Victorian TAFE Association

June 2005

Forward

The Victorian TAFE Association (VTA) is Victoria's peak employer body for the public providers of TAFE in Victoria with membership including all of Victoria's TAFE Institutes and four Victorian Multi-sector Universities.

The Education Standing Committee of the VTA CEO Council presented a Discussion Paper to the VQA in September 2004 titled "Expanding Post School Education Pathways". This Discussion Paper outlines a proposal for the introduction of a new Diploma pathway qualification that would include recognised vocational competencies within a broad industry sector together with more explicit content, assessment and reporting of both basic and higher order conceptual, analytical and interpretive skills.

This Discussion Paper was presented to the Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) for consideration. Subsequently the VQA invited the VTA to undertake a Feasibility Study to further explore the proposal as outlined in the Discussion Paper.

The Feasibility Study was undertaken by Leonie Millar and Nita Schultz on behalf of the VTA with assistance from the VTA Secretariat and a Project Steering Group including Tony Ayers (VQA), Martha Kinsman (CEO Gordon Institute of TAFE) and members of the VTA Education Standing Committee.

The VTA would like to acknowledge the assistance provided by members of the Project Steering Group and the VQA.

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Abbreviations

CMM	Curriculum Maintenance Manager
DEST	Department of Employment, Science and Technology
ENTER score	Tertiary Entrance Rank
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
ITAB	Industry Training Advisory Board
LLEN	Local Learning and Employment Network
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SBNA	School Based New Apprenticeship
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
VERVE	Victorian Cultural and Recreation Industry Training Board
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETiS	Vet in Schools
VQA	Victorian Qualifications Authority
VTA	Victorian TAFE Association

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report focuses on the finding and issues that have emerged from a feasibility study undertaken by the Victorian TAFE Association (VTA) on behalf of the Victorian Qualifications Authority (VQA) in relation to a dual pathway VET Diploma qualification. This dual pathway VET Diploma qualification was originally proposed by the VTA in a Discussion Paper titled 'Expanding Post School Education Pathways' (September 2004). The proposed qualification would be designed to offer a distinct combination of specific industry competencies along with a suitably broad range of generic subjects, with the intention of creating a more open set of pathways than is currently available.

Essentially the Discussion Paper argues that, on both aspirational and affordability grounds, many year 12 completers might benefit from the availability of a post-school qualification which reflects recognised industry standards, offers employment opportunities within a broad industry sector and which also provides sufficient generic/academic development to meet the requirements for entry into Higher Education. The stated aims of the proposed Diploma qualification clearly align to policy initiatives at the State and National levels that seek to develop generic employability skills, learning pathways and a culture of lifelong learning.

While the Discussion Paper does not specify any broad industry areas for the development of such a diploma qualification, the VQA and VTA agreed to investigate three industry areas for the purpose of this feasibility study:

- Sport and Recreation
- Manufacturing
- Community Services (excluding Aged Care)

The methodology employed for this feasibility study included one-to-one and group interviews with key stakeholders, electronic submissions from stakeholders and guidance from members of the Project Steering Group. The investigation sourced advice from LLEN Executive Officers, TAFE providers, multi-sector Universities, Industry Training Boards, teachers delivering post-compulsory years programs in schools, a specific employer and a group of Year 11 and 12 students. Stakeholders included representatives from regional and metropolitan settings and government and non-government secondary schools.

Findings

From the investigations undertaken as part of this study there is sufficient qualitative evidence to suggest that applied learning approaches are highly desired by young students in the post-compulsory years. The popularity of VCAL programs and the significant numbers choosing Senior VCAL suggests that this approach has developed a 'foothold' in the post compulsory years' program options. That the majority of VCAL graduates seek applied learning options post Year 11 and Year 12, including New Apprenticeships, highlights the attractiveness of these learning models.

There is a collective view from Schools, LLENs and students themselves that significant numbers of Year 12 VCE completers are keen to further their education but have not necessarily made firm career choices that would be assisted through current VET provision. While the original Discussion Paper suggested that the proposed Diploma qualification may be an effective pathway into further education and potentially Higher Education for VCAL completers, this investigation has found that on the whole, VCAL completers are highly motivated towards employment outcomes. It is unlikely that students completing Themed VCAL, Intermediate VCAL or Foundation VCAL would undertake a Diploma qualification as

proposed. However, as increasing numbers of Senior VCAL students exit Victorian secondary schools, there may be growing demand for higher level, generalist courses such as the proposed Diploma, based on applied learning methodologies.

The prospective users of educational offerings were highly supportive of the proposition contained within the Discussion Paper. There was especially strong support from stakeholders interviewed in regional areas who saw a Diploma, such as that proposed, offering tertiary learning in local communities without students having to bear the substantial costs of attending learning institutions in metropolitan Melbourne.

While there are matters to be addressed in negotiating articulation and credit transfer arrangements between a generalist Diploma and Higher Education offerings, the proposed Diploma has the capacity to address concerns consistently noted by the Higher Education sector that VET Training Packages are 'too narrow and too shallow'. For a more generalist Diploma to allow graduates articulation into Higher Education, partnerships need to be developed with Higher Education in the early developmental stages of the Diploma course.

This study reviewed several existing examples of curriculum and concludes that the proposed Diploma is sufficiently different both in terms of target audience and outcomes. Within the context of this study, industry, LLENs and secondary school stakeholders interviewed with an interest in the Manufacturing sector provided the highest levels of support for this Diploma proposal. All stakeholder representatives from the Manufacturing sector in this study acknowledged the short comings in the current qualifications to provide underpinning knowledge to meet industry expectations. Manufacturing Learning Australia has revised the industry curriculum priorities in Victoria to include redressing this shortcoming. Although only one sample course structure is provided, other industry sectors outside the scope of this study could be investigated.

Essentially the consultants have formed the opinion that a significant number of young Victorians would prefer a qualification that reflects recognised industry standards, offers employment opportunities within a broad industry sector and which also provides sufficient generic/academic development to provide admission with significant advanced standing by Universities.

Recommendations

1. That the Victorian Qualifications Authority convene a Working Party to identify the rules and principles for the development of the course structure as described in Part 7 of this report. Such a Working Party would include key stakeholders from industry, Higher Education, VTA, TAFE and schools.
2. That the Victorian Qualifications Authority initiates at least one dual pathway VET Diploma qualification pilot course using the VTA Discussion Paper and this report for guidance. It is worthwhile considering using the example provided in this report as applicable to the manufacturing sector.

1. Introduction

This report outlines a feasibility study that has been prepared for the VQA in response to the VTA Discussion Paper *Expanding Post School Education Pathways* (the Discussion Paper). A copy of the VTA Discussion Paper is attached as Appendix 1.

The report focuses on the feasibility of a dual pathway VET diploma qualification designed to offer a distinct combination of specific industry competencies along with a suitably broad range of generic knowledge and skills.

1.1 Background

Essentially the Discussion Paper argues that, “on both aspirational and affordability grounds, many year 12 completers might benefit from the availability of a post-school qualification which reflects recognised industry standards, offers employment opportunities within a broad industry sector and which also provides sufficient generic/academic development to justify admission with significant advanced standing by Universities.” (*Executive Summary – Appendix 1*)

While the Discussion Paper does not specify any broad industry areas for the development of such a diploma qualification, the VQA and VTA agreed to investigate three industry areas for the purpose of this feasibility study:

- Sport and Recreation
- Manufacturing
- Community Services (excluding Aged Care)

1.2 Policy Context

Policy settings at both the State and national levels are increasingly focussed on the importance of generic employability skills. There is mounting public comment that some current training and Training Package content lacks depth with respect to developing generic skills and cognitive competencies.

The Victorian Ministerial Statement *‘Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy’* (2002) likewise emphasises the importance of incorporating generic skills into VET stating that ‘it appears there are requirements for a mixture of vocational, academic and generic skills not usually available through current qualifications.’¹ Further, ‘businesses now seek workers who have sound vocationally specific skills and broadly based generic skills.’²

This feasibility study has been undertaken to assess the need for a new VET accredited Diploma qualification and is based on the recognition outlined in the Higher Level Review of Training Packages that Training Packages do not, and were never intended, to represent the totality of VET provision.³ A further driver for this study has been that, while the Higher Level Review of Training Packages indicates that “the issue of generic skills needs to be ‘front and centre’ in the redevelopment of Training Packages” and that “the current emphasis on technical skills needs to be supplemented (but not replaced) by a greater emphasis on both

¹ Kosky, L (2002) Ministerial Statement “*Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy*”, page 9

² Ibid page 2

³ Schofield, K & McDonald, *Moving On*, ANTA, page 3

cognitive and behavioural skills in response to changing employer expectations”⁴, the National Training Quality Council (NTQC) Training Package Work Plan (revised)⁵ for implementation of the Review does not elicit confidence that these issues are being effectively addressed.

‘Skilling Australia’⁶ proposes that national VET developments may be considering the merit of collapsing and rationalising Training Packages in such a way as to make them less narrowly industry specific and offer more generic and transferable underpinning knowledge and skill. Historically, such developments take considerable time and the need for a new more broadly based model of a VET Diploma is based in part on the assumption that there are young Victorians who may well be disadvantaged in the intervening period should this national suggestion proceed.

1.3 Target Market

The Discussion Paper proposes that the target market for such a Diploma qualification would be young people, predominantly aged 18-25 years:

- from the lowest socio-economic quartile without the financial capacity to accept a university place,
- from regional and rural backgrounds significantly under-represented in school completers’ commencements at University,
- whose ENTER score prevents them from gaining a university place in their preferred field of study and/or places them at risk of being part of the approximately-30% of university entrants who do not progress past their first year of study, and
- seeking a pathway from either general, or, in particular, “themed” Senior VCAL programs.⁷

It is likely that many young people will have two or more of these attributes/characteristics.

The target market was further clarified in discussions with members of the Education Standing Committee of the Victorian TAFE Association CEO Council to include young people with a preference for applied learning methodologies who may have successfully completed Year 12 but have not clarified a preferred specific vocational pathway.

2. Project Objectives

The agreed project objectives are:

- to establish the need for a program of the kind proposed in the Discussion Paper and to identify the essential features required if the proposed Diploma is to provide pathways both into employment and to further higher-level study,
- to identify the ways in which the proposed Diploma program supports government priorities and links to current government initiatives such as VCAL, and
- to identify other issues which arise as a result of the investigation.

3. Project Methodology

This investigation involved negotiations and directions from staff in the Victorian Qualifications Authority including, VCAL authorities, directions from the members of the VTA CEO Council

⁴ Ibid, page 4

⁵ Summary of Revised Training Package Work Plan Outcomes, ANTA December 2004

⁶ ‘Skilling Australia New Directions for Vocational Education and Training’, DEST February 2005

⁷ Expanding Post School Education Pathways, Discussion Paper, VTA 2004 (page 3)

Education Standing Committee and negotiations and directions from the Project Reference Group)

The investigation sought to gauge support for the proposal through a series of stakeholder interviews and focus groups including:

- Three TAFE Institutes,
- Three Universities with TAFE Divisions,
- Five Victorian Industry Training Boards,
- Director – medium sized automotive parts manufacturer, South East Region
- Two regional Senior Secondary Colleges (one independent school/one government school),
- One metropolitan Senior Secondary College (VCAL Pilot Program school),
- One Specialist Training Centre,
- The Assistant Director Dept. of Education and Training (Gippsland Region),
- Three Executive Officers LLEN,
- Sample of key teachers currently delivering VCAL programs,
- Sample of key VCAA staff,
- Six Victorian TAFE Curriculum Maintenance Managers,
- Four Careers teachers in the South Gippsland region, and
- Representative cross section of Year 12 students in a secondary school in regional Victoria

(Refer Appendix 2 for a list of the organisations and/or individuals)

In preparation for discussions the Discussion Paper was distributed to stakeholders and a brief synopsis provided in the telephone conversation initiating the contact.

A targeted question set was used for each of the stakeholder groups - providers, Industry Training Boards, Curriculum Maintenance Managers and Schools. However, a rich source of information came from more free flowing discussions during the interviews about the Diploma concept related to the needs of young learners.

(Refer Appendix 3 for a list of the guiding questions)

4. Limitations of the Methodology

Prospective interviewees were emailed a copy of the Discussion Paper and guiding questions around which the interview would be shaped, either directly, or by a third party contact within the stakeholder organisation. Many of those interviewed had either not fully considered the Discussion Paper or the list of questions prior to the interviews. Consequently the interviewees were not always well prepared. In these circumstances the consultant provided a summary of the contents. The question format was not rigidly followed since some questions were not clearly relevant, or the interviewee did not have the relevant response information prepared or available.

In the case of the focus group with students, it was not reasonable to expect them to read and fully understand the conceptual framework and the interviewer took considerable time explaining the concept at the beginning of the focus group; care was taken to avoid introducing bias that could influence the focus group's discussions.

There was a lack of clarity with the interpretation of the term "Manufacturing" with most interviewees understanding the term to mean "Engineering" and directing the consultant's enquiries to Engineering departments within TAFE Institutes and Universities. Taking a broader view of the term Manufacturing would necessitate including activities in areas such as

Industrial Ceramics, Food Processing, Forest Products, Polymers, Pulp and Paper and Plastics. However, as these areas have relatively low levels of delivery, are highly specialised and predominantly delivered in the workplace, the consultants are of the view that relevant data has been collected from the interviews conducted. Further, as new qualifications in the Manufacturing area are being delivered by Engineering departments in TAFE Institutes, the consultant is confident that the information obtained from speaking to people employed in areas designated Engineering/Manufacturing is representative of that broader group's opinions and experiences.

Ongoing review and evaluation processes of both Training Packages and curriculum, occurring in parallel with these investigations has meant new, emerging information may not have come to the notice of the consultants. The final report reflects exploration of each source brought to the notice of the consultants.

5. Linkages with Government Initiatives

5.1 The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning

The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) was introduced into the Victorian post-compulsory years' programs in 2002. Of the three VCAL levels, Foundation, Intermediate and Senior, demand for the Diploma qualification under investigation here is likely to be created from among Senior VCAL completers. Historically a relatively small number of VCAL students have undertaken Senior VCAL (8% of students in 2003)⁸. While to date, the most popular choices among students undertaking VCAL programs have been those at the Foundation and Intermediate levels,⁹ there have been increasing enrolments in Senior VCAL programs such that in 2005 approximately 1887 students are undertaking these programs. Senior VCAL enrolments have increased from 2% of total VCAL enrolments in 2004 to 18% in 2005. It should be noted that 2005 is earmarked for the full implementation of a Senior VCAL program. Respondents to this investigation were therefore only able to comment on the proposed Diploma on the basis of current experiences.

In relation to Intermediate VCAL completers, interviewees for this study from Schools and LLENs concurred that most VCAL students undertake the Intermediate program as this level is viewed as providing effective pathways into apprenticeships or other TAFE programs and the further education demands of VCAL completers are met through existing pathways (TAFE and higher level school programs).¹⁰ This view is consistent with the findings of Evaluation of VCAL Trial 2002.¹¹

Respondents to this study also expressed mixed opinions regarding the potential demand from Senior VCAL graduates for a more generic VET Diploma as a pathway into higher education. Rather, the benefit of a more generic VET Diploma may be to provide access to para-professional employment opportunities. It was generally expressed that the further education needs of these students are adequately met through the existing pathways available in TAFE. Generally it was noted by these respondents that students who are interested in higher education after doing a school based VCAL tend to re-enter the VCE following the completion of the Intermediate VCAL rather than continuing with Senior VCAL. This opinion is supported by the data from the destination data contained in the Evaluation of VCAL Trial 2002¹² where 73% of VCAL completers intended to continue their studies in 2003. The destination data from

⁸ VQA Paper 21/8 Attachment 2, 2 April 2004

⁹ Henry et al, (2003), 'Evaluation of VCAL Trail 2002, RIPVET page 141

¹⁰ Barwon South West Region, Destination Data for VCAL 2004 Students as at 1 April 2005

¹¹ Barwon South West Region, Destination Data for VCAL 2004 Students as at 1 April 2005

¹² Henry et al, (2003), 'Evaluation of VCAL Trail 2002, RIPVET page 159

this group identified 88% intended to advance their education in either of the senior school certificate programs – VCAL and VCE and 12% to TAFE courses. No respondents in this group anticipated a pathway from VCAL to Higher Education.

Distinguishing between students undertaking a “themed” VCAL and those completing a more generalist VCAL did not yield any differences in responses. In fact it was noted that young people completing a Senior, ‘Themed’ VCAL are the least likely candidates for a new and more general TAFE Diploma as, in the main, they have made specific vocational choices already. Feedback indicated that these students are in fact the VCAL cohort with the most clearly defined vocational pathway in general proceeding directly into a VET program at either an apprenticeship or higher level course in the area of the theme. The VCAL program itself serves as a ‘taster’ for vocational options while providing important learning in literacy, numeracy, and personal development.

Respondents in this study indicated that young people undertaking VCAL programs are undertaking that certificate course in preference to VCE because they are not interested in higher education at that point in their lives and because their aspirations appear to be towards the more applied style of learning available in VET. The pathway they were predominantly interested in was the pathway to work (Careers Teachers, LLEN Executive Officers, and Teachers). At the time of writing this report a series of VCAL Pathway Development Pilot Projects are being undertaken. It has been suggested during the course of this investigation that these programs will incorporate the development of necessary generic employability skills and academic skills that are discipline based, and will better prepare students for Higher Education or lifelong learning.

While the vast majority of current VCAL completers are seeking employment pathways, some are articulating to higher education: Government schools 1%, Catholic Schools 2% and TAFE 2%¹³. As VCAL is a relatively ‘new’ post-compulsory education offering it is difficult to identify a clear trend among VCAL completers seeking higher education options. However as applied learning methodologies become part of the mainstream of post-compulsory schooling, there may be increasing demand for higher level qualifications post-Year 12 that mirror the VCAL in providing a mix of academic and applied learning, employability and vocational skills. As an example, the South East LLEN has established a project group to investigate building a VCAL pathway in Nursing with a Diploma as a ‘stepping stone’ into a Higher Education undergraduate program in Nursing.

5.2 Lifelong Learning

In the opinion of Careers Teachers, LLEN Executive Officers, secondary school teachers and students interviewed, the proposed Diploma qualification could be a useful additional learning pathway particularly in regional areas. With the exceptions of the North Central LLEN region and SMART Geelong LLEN region, all Victorian regional LLEN areas report university destinations for Year 12 completers¹⁴ at levels below the state average (42.6%). South Gippsland records the third lowest university destination rating among LLEN regions in 2004 with 26.1%. For this reason South Gippsland was selected for focus groups with students and careers teachers and the South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN Executive Officer participated in separate interviews.

The South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN Executive Officer highlighted significant levels of deferrals, largely for university places, among year 12 completers (11.7% compared to the

¹³ VQA Paper 21/8 Attachment 2, 2 April 2004 pages 4 & 5

¹⁴ Polsel et al, (2004), ‘The On-Track Survey 2004 LLEN-Level Report, University of Melbourne

state average of 6.3%) She credited the costs involved in commuting to university campuses or relocating to urban centres as central to this result. This is borne out by the On-Track Survey data 2003¹⁵, where travel, location and associated costs are the main reasons cited by regional respondents for not taking-up University offers. Gippsland Year 12 students recorded the highest response level to the costs of travel (approximately 7.5%) being a key factor. The South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN Executive Officer advised that many year 12 completers accept deferral of a university place in the hope of working to save enough money to manage the costs of accepting the university offer at a later time. Frequently though the offer is not taken up by the student.

Students expressed similar sentiments:

‘It would be good to have local access to this [the proposed Diploma qualification] course because students in this country area [South Gippsland] have financial difficulties going to University’

“Students that say they are going to take a year or so to save up to go to University invariably don’t. This course could be done as a pathway to university and could maybe be done part-time so students can work and save.”

“A course like this is similar to Foundation studies in that it keeps people in the ‘learning loop’.”

“There is not a universal drive among young exit Year 12 students to go to Melbourne as the first priority. People like to live at home and like to live in a small community like Leongatha. This course would provide a middle ground and a transition state where the person can keep studying and maintain established friendship circles.”

LLEN Executive Officers, teachers and students commented that exit Year 12 students accept university places in fields of study that are not really of interest. Students in particular described a significant incidence of this occurring among their peers. Up to 40% of students in the Smart Geelong region LLEN area drop out of University in the first year. Reasons cited as factors influencing this drop out rate include:

- accepting university places outside interest areas,
- the lack of applied learning methodologies at university, and
- a lack of preparedness among many young people to be, largely, independent learners.

Both the Smart Geelong LLEN Executive Officer and the Director of Teaching and Learning at a large private school concur with colleagues that the proposed Diploma would allow those young people who have yet to make a firm career choice, the option of higher level learning while refining their choices.

A Diploma qualification such as the one proposed in the Discussion Paper could be delivered through the extensive TAFE campus structure in Victoria and as such would allow young people to remain in the community in which they have established roots. They could continue to engage in their community activities and possibly have local casual or part time employment. In the experience of an Executive Director in a regional LLEN, a large number of VCE graduates have not made clear vocational choices yet still want to consider full time studies. TAFE studies, with highly focussed vocational outcomes are not ideal for all, nor is the theoretical learning associated with Higher Education. Alternatively, if the proposed Diploma was implemented, this entry level vocational qualification could equip them with generic employment and life skills as well as supporting future learning activities. “A course such as

¹⁵ Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning (The University of Melbourne)

this keeps a broader range of options open after the Diploma and this is a good thing.” (Year 12 VCE Student, Leongatha Secondary College)

This Diploma learning pathway is also supported by members interviewed representative of the secondary school sector. The proposed Diploma provides an opportunity for young people across the broad spectrum of Year 12 school leavers, including those achieving ENTER scores below what is required for a University, to achieve entry in their preferred field/s of study. Schools noted the significant numbers of kinaesthetic learners, frequently those not achieving higher level ENTER, who would wish to engage in cognitively challenging learning post Year 12 but are not looking for a specific vocational qualification. The proposed Diploma including a vocational outcome and higher order analytical, research and writing skills, could be motivational to kinaesthetic learners.

For the 70% of young people completing Year 12 and not aspiring to university, this course would provide a broad based employment preparation and may assist students to make better decisions about what to do with their lives. (LLEN Executive Officer). Smart Geelong LLEN exit students rate employment as the highest motivator with students showing high interest in workforce participation. Therefore further education linked to employment outcomes would, in the opinion of teachers and LLEN Executive Officers, be popular among students. The LLEN Executive Officers also considered the proposed Diploma would be popular with employers alike as an example of applied learning in an explicit context and offering broad-based generic employability skills as preparation for a variety of career options.

While the Discussion Paper did not consider the learning needs of mature aged people wanting to return to study and learning, several interviewees noted the relevance of the proposed Diploma as an entry point for paraprofessionals seeking recognition of skills and competencies to further education.

5.3 Learning Pathways

Both the Commonwealth and State Governments prioritise pathways between VET and Higher Education as part of the policy agenda. The views of respondents varied considerably in relation to the potential for the proposed Diploma qualification to enable extended articulation pathways into Higher Education.

In the State of Victoria, University acceptance and recognition of TAFE “articulators” can be heavily reliant on individual arrangements between Institutions. Sometimes such arrangements are even dependent on relationships between individuals in TAFE and Higher Education and may be jeopardised if a particular individual leaves either the TAFE provider or (and especially), the University. Another factor influencing higher education in relation to TAFE articulators is the number of applications for courses from the VTAC market. When ENTER scores are down, and applications are low, interviewees commented that TAFE articulators are more welcome. Articulation arrangements between TAFE and Higher Education can be described as both transitory and fragile. The view was expressed in interviews that a new TAFE Diploma of the type described in the Discussion Paper will not substantially change this situation.

Among respondents from Higher Education providers there are perceptions that TAFE qualifications under the Training Package regime have become both narrower and shallower. Competencies are not seen to be conceptual in nature and TAFE Diplomas are criticised for not providing students with the tools of lifelong learning including research skills, analytical skills and writing skills.

Some University courses have very low ENTER scores and high attrition rates. Anecdotally, it has been suggested by stakeholders that such courses are accepting students who would

probably be better suited to a TAFE course because of its more applied nature. While the aspirations of many students and their parents is to achieve a University qualification, then this situation will not change, except with the co-operation of Universities.

The Executive Officer of a regional LLEN indicated that there could be considerable benefits to young people who have received middle-range ENTER scores to progress to a Diploma with a Certificate IV imbedded in the learning and focussing explicit attention on the higher level conceptual and analytical skills deemed essential pre-requisite skills to entering an undergraduate program. Assuming negotiated pathways are in place with Higher Education providers, the proposed Diploma could address the criticisms levelled at some Training Packages while allowing the young person to engage in applied learning.

However, several interviewees cautioned against emphasising articulation to Higher Education as the primary advantage of the proposed Diploma, at the expense of high level vocational outcomes. Overall, despite support for the concept of a more generic VET Diploma qualification from stakeholders in the Victorian Secondary School's communities, there are significant historical and relationship issues to be addressed before articulation pathways could be assured. Articulation does need to be addressed as a matter of priority should such a Diploma be piloted.

5.4 Victorian Essential Learning Skills

The implementation of the Victorian Essential Learning Skills (VELS) framework has the ability to change the culture of learning in secondary schools' curriculum to accept the importance of interdisciplinary capacities needed by individuals and physical, personal and social development. As these learning principles become embedded in learning at the secondary schools level, the value of a more generic Diploma qualification as proposed may be embraced as a pathway for Year 12 graduates.

5.5 Australian Technical Colleges

The shape, role and potential student cohort for the Australian Technical Colleges is still unknown in practice – as is the way these students might articulate into either TAFE or University. The "Institute for Trade Skill Excellence" may also impact on the VET system in as yet unknown ways.

6. Industry Contexts

The project consultants, in consultation with the Education Standing Committee of the VTA CEO Council and the VQA, agreed to explore the proposed VET Diploma qualification in the context of three industry sectors: Sport and Recreation, Manufacturing and Community Services.

The following summarises these investigations.

6.1 Industry Sector/Field of Studies - Sport and Recreation

Currently there are five Sport and Recreation related Diploma qualifications available in the Sport Industry Training Package (SRS03) and additional related vocational courses outside the Training Package. At present the most commonly delivered courses are the Diploma of Sport and Recreation, the Diploma of Sport (Development) and the Diploma of Outdoor Recreation. Programs in this field range from general Sport and Recreation to specific programs in Sports Coaching, Athlete Support, Outdoor Recreation and specialist areas of

Resort Management in the fields of Marine, Dive and Spa. The Diploma of Venues and Events and the Diploma of Tourism (Ski Facilities Management and Ski Area Management) are both related to the Sport and Recreation area.

The Victorian Purchasing Guide is in the final stages of development for the new suite of vocational qualifications for the Fitness Industry (SRF04) including a Diploma qualification.

6.1.1 TAFE Providers' Perspective

The Institutes interviewed cater for one or two groups in the Diploma of Sport and Recreation and the Diploma of Sport (Development). One respondent Institute offers the Diploma of Outdoor Recreation. All Institutes interviewed also deliver the Certificates III and IV in Fitness and presumably some will consider allocating public funding to offering the new Diploma in Fitness in the near future. Respondents noted that Certificate III and Certificate IV courses are extremely popular with people wishing to become Fitness Instructors or Personal Trainers. The student cohort in these latter two courses is different from the full-time students in the Diploma courses, in that they are not generally exit Year 12 students seeking to undertake full time studies with a long-term career in mind in that industry. Often they are students in either a full-time or part-time course at University or in TAFE who want to use the qualification in Sport and Recreation or Fitness to seek work in a gymnasium or similar, in much the same way that other students use either the retail or hospitality industries as a source of income support while studying. The other student cohort undertaking these courses are older people seeking a life-style change by downsizing their work commitment to part-time or casual employment and seeking improved job satisfaction.

The rural provider interviewed could see a possible market for a Diploma which drew from all courses in the Training Package and was designed to articulate into a Physical Education program in Higher Education. However as there appears to be an already 'thin' market in this regional area for the existing Diplomas in Sport & Recreation, it could prove difficult maintaining a market for such an alternative Diploma regionally. Conversely, the metropolitan TAFE providers interviewed indicated that they have unmet demand in this broad area. Drawing on the metropolitan population base, such a learning pathway may warrant further exploration.

6.1.2 Secondary School Perspective

Discussions with staff at a metropolitan Senior Secondary College which has a Year 11 and 12 cohort of over 600 students confirms that Sport and Recreation is currently a "hot" area for post year 12 applications. The industry is regarded as "sexy," by school students who are seduced by media representations of sporting celebrities and associations. School staff commented that in their experiences, many of those who complete the existing Diploma qualifications are successful in gaining entry to higher education providers particularly in dual sector institutions offering both TAFE and Higher Education courses. If indeed established pathways are achieving lifelong learning opportunities and successful employment outcomes in Sport and Recreation for young people, an additional Diploma qualification may not be warranted at present.

6.1.3 Industry Training Board Perspective

The Discussion Paper suggests that the new pathway qualification could include recognised vocational competencies drawn from one or more industry training packages within a broad industry sector. As a point of interest the Service Industries Skills Training Board was asked to comment on this Diploma proposal and specifically whether there may be advantages in developing a Diploma drawing on vocational competencies from both the Sport and Recreation and Hospitality/Tourism fields. Such a qualification would include higher order

conceptual, analytical and interpretive skills and may align to employment opportunities in Recreation Management/Tourism. In responding the Executive Officer of the Service Industries Skills Training Board commented that the 'mix and match' advantages of the Training Package are not accessed regularly and that vocational preparation for employment in Recreation Management/Tourism could be improved by using the flexibilities built into Training Package course structures rather than adding to the qualifications suite.

The Executive Officer felt that Hospitality/Tourism was perhaps atypical in that all VET options¹⁶ are well subscribed by providers and students. In regional Victoria TAFE and Higher Education providers are offering courses in local communities to young regional Victorians with an interest in Hospitality or Tourism. As a result these young people have a choice that does not require them to relocate to Melbourne to access learning designed for para-professional careers and pathways to higher education in this industry sector. Further it was noted that the preliminary findings from the triennial review of the Tourism Training Package currently underway, suggest that more options will be built into this Training Package that may address concerns that the current Training Package lacks flexibility. In summary, the Executive Director believes that the existing qualifications in Tourism/Hospitality are serving the needs of both industry and students.

The Victorian Cultural and Recreation Industry Training Board (VERVE) holds the view that there is little prospect of work in the Recreation Industry, characterised by poorly paid casual work and unpaid volunteer labour, for any more Diploma places than are currently being produced. This comment stands irrespective of whether the qualification is from an existing Training Package or a new framework as proposed in the Discussion Paper. VERVE does not currently support the development of a new Diploma qualification.

6.1.4 Other Stakeholders

Based on the consistent view of industry representatives, TAFE providers and secondary school stakeholders interviewed, it was determined that further in-depth investigations with other stakeholders was not necessary for the purpose of this report.

6.1.5 Summary Perspective

Schools, TAFE providers Services Industries Skills Training Board and the Victorian Cultural and Recreation Industry Training Board all expressed doubts about the value of an additional, all be it more general or generic Diploma qualification in the Sport and Recreation field. If anything, they are collectively of the view there is too much that is general or generic in the existing courses. Both the TAFE providers and VERVE referred to the problems in developing the State Purchasing Guide for the recently endorsed Diploma of Fitness. There are also problems with the existing Diploma qualifications in Sport and Recreation in relation to pre-requisite competencies from the Certificates I, II and III. Interviewees are working towards resolving these problems before considering the notion of developing another Diploma qualification

Students when interviewed did not offer this industry as a target sector for their further education.

6.2 Industry Sector/Field of Studies - Manufacturing

There are thirty-two qualifications available at the Diploma or Advanced Diploma level available, in the Training Packages applicable to manufacturing industries, and twenty other related courses. Many of these are highly specialised and have small numbers of enrolled

¹⁶ including VET in VCE, VCAL, SBNA, New Apprenticeships, Certificate IV and Diploma qualifications

students each year. Courses range from Food Processing, Timber Products, Printing and Graphic Arts, Pulp and Paper Operations to Seafood Processing, Textiles, Clothing and Footwear and the Competitive Manufacturing Training Package (MCM50104). The latter is a newly accredited Training Package currently being piloted by a group of Victorian TAFE Institutes with the implementation being managed through the specialist centre at Swinburne University of Technology (TAFE Division). During interviews there appeared to be some confusion among providers in understanding, and differentiating, existing qualifications with the new Diploma in Competitive Manufacturing (MCM50104).

In the Engineering field there are twelve Training Package qualifications at the Diploma or Advanced Diploma level and seven other courses. There is an overlap between Manufacturing and Engineering courses with providers interchanging the terminology to the extent that a common meaning is implied.

6.2.1 TAFE Providers' Perspective

It would appear that, unlike the Sport and Recreation industry sector, Manufacturing is neither “hot” nor “sexy” in the minds of senior secondary students. Interviewees reported some unmet demand in specialist short-term training for industry, for example in the area of Computerised Numerical Control but in general there is no unmet demand in existing Manufacturing courses for persons wanting to study on a full-time basis at the Diploma level. This begs the question though whether a lack of unmet demand is indicative of the relevance of the courses to potential applicants.

Training providers supported the view that existing Training Package qualifications appropriate for post Year 12 students may not provide the necessary emphasis on the types of skills para-professional graduates would be seeking to achieve career aspirations. However, all were wary of addressing this deficiency by adding another Diploma qualification to the existing suite of choices. TAFE providers felt that the continuous improvement processes employed to review Training Packages should be used to address any such deficiencies.

6.2.2 Industry Training Board Perspective

Manufacturing Learning Victoria was supportive of the idea being proposed in the Discussion Paper as underpinning knowledge of manufacturing is not a strength of the current Training Packages. This proposed Diploma course could be suitable for pre-employment to higher level positions in a broad range of manufacturing enterprises. Although the Training Package currently prepares competent technical operators, at higher levels such technical proficiency is of less importance and underpinning knowledge comes to the fore. Another benefit of the proposed Diploma qualification is that it could extend the qualification framework of the newly recognised Manufacturing Technology Cadetships under the umbrella of the Australian Industry Group by including breadth and depth of underpinning skills and knowledge in mathematics and sciences. With these underpinning skills students may be able to progress to higher level qualifications in non-trade areas that typically lack relevance to metals manufacturing – plastics, specialty chemicals and glass manufacturing.

The potential target group described for a Diploma as proposed in the Discussion Paper is not those students who have missed out on a University course and who find the current TAFE Diplomas within Training Packages too specific, but a group of high achieving students who would raise the profile of Manufacturing. This target group is in fact a similar cohort to that articulated by the Prime Minister as being the target group for the Australian Technical Colleges.

The General Manufacturing CMM supported the view that there was a need for a more generalist process manufacturing course which would be more appealing to the post VCE

market than those which are currently available. The view was that such a course should include a general orientation to the process manufacturing sector and the varied careers available as well as research skills, design, innovation, mechanical skills and underpinning knowledge in physics and mathematics contextualised to study streams.

Manufacturing Learning Victoria also considered that the existing associated VET in Schools program which focuses on either Engineering, Clothing or Plastics was far too narrow and was not providing a useful or attractive introduction to the Manufacturing industry for secondary students. This view was supported by the General Manufacturing Curriculum Maintenance Manager. Students' experiences in VET in Schools Engineering programs may be discouraging students from Manufacturing as a potential career path. A more generalist and innovative approach to this area was perceived to be necessary.

6.2.3 Other Stakeholders

The Director of a metropolitan medium sized (approximately 200 employees) automotive components manufacturer exporting to USA and China explained the company is experiencing skills shortages for highly skilled engineers and process manufacturing engineers. In particular an understanding of logistics and production planning coupled with mental and technical flexibility. The Director considers this Diploma proposal may assist addressing these skills shortages and may provide an additional benefit of creating understandings of the differences between design engineering and manufacturing engineering.

Persons interviewed for this report indicated that the Manufacturing sector itself has an image problem among secondary school students. This is borne out by the experience of a dual sector university in attempting to introduce a themed Senior VCAL in Manufacturing. The intention was for this course to provide a series of pathways for students – either into an appropriate Advanced Diploma in TAFE, directly into Engineering in Higher Education (provided certain requirements are met, entry would be guaranteed) or into an apprenticeship. The efforts of this University have been unsuccessful in attracting students to this Senior VCAL program. However, one needs to ask whether the lack of demand lies with the image of manufacturing alone, with the aspirations of Senior VCAL graduates, or, more likely, a combination of factors. As the Senior VCAL is a relatively 'young' option in Victoria and a body of trend data is not available, it is not possible to judge whether VCAL students aspire to further education and/or successfully achieve entry to further education. Conversations with three LLEN Executive Officers highlighted the importance of pathways beyond VCAL that will lead to economic outcomes in occupations that are well remunerated.

6.2.4 Summary Perspective

All stakeholders perceived gaps in the depth of underpinning knowledge demonstrated in Training Packages related to process manufacturing. It was agreed that Victorian exit students could benefit from local initiatives to address these gaps – whether that be customising existing Training Packages, customising existing curriculum or developing a new Diploma qualification as proposed in the Discussion Paper.

6.3 Industry Sector/Field of Studies - Community Services

There are forty-one Diploma qualifications available as part of the national Training Packages in Health (HLT02) and Community Services (CHC02) ranging from very specific areas such as 'Blood Collection', to broader course areas such as Community Welfare Work and Community Development. Within Victoria the most popular vocational education and training courses (as evidenced by student enrolments) are nominated as Aged Care, Nursing, Children's Services, Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD), Protective Care and the broader area of Community Welfare

Work. Vocational training in Community services, Welfare studies, Children's Services and Nursing are substantial components of the profiles of each of the Institutes interviewed.

6.3.1 TAFE Providers' Perspective

The perception among TAFE providers interviewed is that at least two of the Training Package qualifications, the Diploma of Community Welfare Work and the Diploma of Community Development, are quite generalist in nature and that there is sufficient flexibility in the Community Services Training Package qualifications already, a new Diploma qualification as proposed with a focus on the Community Services sector is not required. Interviewees were of the opinion that a strength of many of the Community Services and Health courses is that they do lead to specific employment outcomes. Persons enrolling in these courses are either:

- very focussed on a specific employment destination such as Nursing or Child Care,
- already working in the sector without a formal qualification and want to gain this qualification, or
- want to upgrade in order to improve their employment and promotion potential.

In rural areas there is a concern about oversupply of labour and one regional TAFE provider; "rests" courses every few years so as not to be training people for jobs which do not exist.

Providers also indicated that although the applicants for Children's Services, Nursing and some of the more general Community Services courses, such as Youth Work, are drawn from the VCE market, many of the others (Aged Care, Community Welfare, Community Development, AOD, Juvenile Justice) are mature aged learners and often drawn from the community they are seeking to serve. Those entering Children's Services courses are sometimes unsuccessful applicants for entry into Higher Education courses in Early Childhood Development, but more often young women with particular perceptions of this field as a vocation. Many, perhaps even a majority, of those entering Nursing are also unsuccessful applicants for a University course and while they might have aspirations to continue with Nursing study the majority still commence work immediately after completion of the Certificate IV in Health (Nursing) (21358VIC).

In the opinion of one large metropolitan TAFE provider a very small number of students in the Community Services field (fewer than 5%) were reported as being interested in pursuing pathways to Higher Education. On the other hand, anecdotal advice received from careers teachers suggests that in Health (Nursing) the articulation aspirations of TAFE graduates to Higher Education is significant. Several TAFE providers supplied examples where agreed pathways have been negotiated with a University for Children's Services graduates into further studies in Early Childhood Education or Primary Teaching, and for the other diplomas such as Welfare, Youth Work, and Community Development to articulate into Social Work or Social Science courses in the Higher Education sector. These sources felt that existing pathways catered adequately for the aspirations of their students. Two RTOs also have agreed pathways for Nursing graduates and one TAFE provider has negotiated an agreement with a University for international students articulating to further education having completed a VET qualification in Nursing.

From the comments received it appears that TAFE providers were not convinced a new Diploma qualification would broaden educational or vocational pathways for young people.

6.3.2 Industry Training Board Perspective

The view of the Victorian Community Services and Health Industry Training Board is that while there is no need for an additional more general Diploma in the Community Services/Welfare area, there is a possible need in the Health sector. This new Diploma qualification could offer credits into a range of other Diplomas and also into Higher Education in the areas of nursing,

allied health, mental health, disability, massage, alternative therapies, social work and/or early childhood development. A proposed course framework could include a significant component of “knowledge” competencies in areas such as:

- human development,
- science (anatomy, physiology, perhaps chemistry),
- psychology,
- social theory,
- statistics (mathematics), and
- community development.

Such a Diploma course would move away from the mandatory placements and rigid framework of the regulated occupations such as Nursing and would potentially offer the basis for a range of career options in the broad health/human services sector.

Respondents suggested that such a course may be either an Associate Degree or a Diploma though the Associate Degree nomenclature may be more appealing to the target audience. Under the equity principles espoused in the Discussion Paper a VET Diploma qualification would be a preferred accreditation pathway to an Associate Degree.

6.3.3 Other Stakeholders

Based on the TAFE providers and ITB perspectives it was determined that further in-depth investigations with other stakeholders was not necessary for the purpose of this report. However, it should be noted that in conversation, both regional LLEN Executive Officers and the South Gippsland Careers Teachers’ commented that Nursing achieves high levels of interest among young people who find difficulty accessing further education outside their local areas. If a Diploma qualification as proposed were designed to meet vocational outcomes in the Health sector and provide pathways to Higher Education, there may be significant levels of demand.

6.3.4 Summary Perspective

It may well be possible to develop a qualification offering specific Health related vocational outcomes at AQF Certificate IV within the framework of a VET Diploma qualification. Such a Diploma would, give participants the opportunity of a clear vocational direction, but also offer further generic study should they wish to pursue a career in the Health Services area. One suggestion is that a Diploma of Health Services could be developed which would also include the Certificate IV in Nursing as the vocational outcome.

While the broad notion of a new Diploma qualification as proposed, carries some support, the example suggested is dependent on the review of the existing Certificate IV in Nursing, currently being undertaken by the Nurses Board of Victoria (NBV). One of the likely outcomes of the review is that the existing Certificate IV course will be expanded to include medications training, and the development of a Diploma qualification.

7 A Sample Diploma Course Structure

Two choices were presented by respondents to address the needs identified herein: Existing provision could be expanded and customised or a new Diploma qualification could be designed.

7.1 Existing Courses

The Diploma of Further Education (21015VIC) developed in 1999 was designed to provide an alternative pathway into higher education for the educationally, socially and/or geographically disadvantaged. It was anticipated that the course would be offered in a variety of community-based providers linking first to TAFE Institutes and thence to higher education. The course consists of four modules specially developed for this award – *Reflective Learning and Planning 1A and 1B* and *Reflective Learning and Planning 2A and 2B*, along with a series of negotiated modules from already accredited VET Diplomas or Advanced Diplomas. Some of these would be generic modules such as Communication Skills or Computer Skills and the remainder would be industry specific depending on the pathway chosen. It was hoped that the industry based modules would lead to a broad vocational outcome. Nineteen individuals enrolled in this course in 2003 across the State (6881 SCH) – none in the 15-19 year age group and 22 enrolments occurred in 2004 (5542 SCH). Only three enrolments in 2004 were from the age group 15-19 years. These figures suggest either there is little need for such a generic course or that its existence is not well known or publicised. This course is distinguished from the Diploma proposed in this study in both the target audience and the vocational outcome. The proposed Diploma targets Year 12 completers and imbeds a Certificate IV vocational qualification within the structure. The Diploma of Further Education attracts more mature aged students and does not offer a vocational certificate qualification within the structure.¹⁷

The Diploma of Liberal Arts (21220VIC) is another course which is designed to incorporate higher order skills used in higher education, (*Learning to Learn, Economy and Society, Enquiry and Presentation*), along with skills necessary for further education such as *Word-processing Fundamentals* and *Keyboarding*. The Diploma of Liberal Arts is currently offered in 2 TAFE Institutes, 2 dual sector Institutes, the CAE and an ACE provider. A written comment from a senior educationalist in a dual sector institution states that “the Diploma of Liberal Arts has been particularly successful in attracting exit VCE students whose ENTER score was insufficient for their chosen course or, perhaps more importantly, exit VCE students who were undecided about what to do next. Indeed in recent years the demand for places in the Diploma of Liberal Arts at Victoria University by eligible applicants so far exceeded available places.” Demand for the course has been maintained over ten years with increasing demand from exit year 12 students. Further this respondent noted the Diploma of Liberal Arts “enables them [students] to make real choices about further study options” and “has been particularly successful in preparing students for entry into higher education courses in Arts, Social Sciences, Education and some Sport and Recreation courses.” However, as noted by one provider, the Diploma of Liberal Arts does little to prepare students for any particular vocation. The proposed Diploma under investigation in this study has the capacity to broaden pathways options into fields currently not developed in the Diploma of Further Education or the Diploma of Liberal Arts such as those containing higher level mathematics and science knowledge as well as offering a vocational qualification.

7.2 A New Course Structure

In Victoria examples of accredited curriculum served to inform this study. The Diploma of Engineering Technology (21621VIC) and the Advanced Diploma of Engineering Technology (21622VIC) have recently been reaccredited (January 2005 – December 2009). Industry

¹⁷ It should be noted that the re-accreditation of this course is due to commence in the near future and the Accreditation Project Steering Group have been considering adopting a course structure that retains a core of key study skills and includes specific units of competency in streams such as Arts and Science.

interviewees indicated that the designs of these courses aim to address gaps in the existing Engineering Training Package; principally specificity in some areas and lack of depth for articulation to Higher Education. These courses offer learning in industry areas such as computer aided design, hydraulics, pneumatics and computerised numerical control. These course offerings, having been available for several years have well established articulation arrangements into further education. The Diploma of Engineering Technology and Advanced Diploma of Engineering Technology are available as cadetships with the vast majority of current students entering the Diploma as school leavers. This course includes three streams: Mechatronics and Robotics, Vacuum Technology and Clean Room Technology. The Executive Officer, Engineering Skills Training Board Victoria Inc. noted the success of these courses (21621VIC and 21622VIC) in meeting Victorian industry needs. In 2003, 3826 individuals enrolled in these courses and 3671 individuals in 2004. In 2004 662 individuals aged 15-19 years enrolled in these courses.

The concerns with current training options expressed by stakeholders in the manufacturing sector responding to this study appear similar to those expressed by stakeholders in the engineering sector in the past; current qualifications lack essential underpinning industry knowledge. Manufacturing Learning Australia has revised the industry curriculum priorities in Victoria to include redressing this shortcoming. The concerns of the Engineering sector led to the development of the Victorian courses 21621VIC and 21622VIC. Perhaps a Diploma qualification as proposed in the Discussion Paper with a Manufacturing 'flavour' could address these concerns?

Like the VCAL, the proposed Diploma qualification provides an accredited VET program with an applied learning approach, but at an advanced level. The course structure includes recognition of vocational competencies from Training Packages within a broad industry sector and provides balance between occupationally specific knowledge, applied and practical learning and generic cognitive skill development. This approach has been described by LLEN Executive Officers and those interviewed from the secondary schools sector as a strength of the proposed Diploma. Respondents emphasised the importance of a course structure that is flexible, generic and capable of accommodating part-time employment and prioritises employment skills development.

In developing a draft course framework consideration has been given to the importance employers place on the development of employability skills. A DEST commissioned research report found that "(d)uring the interviews a large number of employers indicated that they would prefer to teach a new employee technical rather than employability skills. Therefore, those who possess employability skills are more likely to obtain and maintain employment than those who have them to a lesser degree"¹⁸ This view was supported by anecdotal advice from across all respondent groups in the course of this investigation.

A further principal included in the sample course structure relates to a concern among respondents that TAFE students may experience difficulties articulating to Higher Education because of the fundamental differences in VET and Higher Education course structures. The high volume of competencies contained in typical VET qualifications can be confusing to Higher Education professionals more familiar with structures generally including a maximum of four subjects per semester. It was suggested that if the TAFE system could devise a different way of reporting on competencies for articulation purposes (for example "clumping" them into subjects or integrated units, it would assist Higher Education to understand the value of the "subject" more readily than is currently the case. The draft course structure suggests minimising the total number of course units. Should a new, more generic, Diploma qualification be developed, planning must include Higher Education partners and articulation

¹⁸ Employability Skills for the Future Project (2002), Australian Chamber of Commerce and the Business Council of Australia, DEST (p. 49).

arrangements defined. Respondents noted that where planning occurs in conjunction with the Higher Education sector, articulation may be more successful as there would be a better content match to ensure TAFE students develop skills in generic areas such as research and independent learning strategies which are necessary for entry to and success at the Higher Education level.

To assist the reader to understand the structure of a Diploma qualification within the context of this investigation, an example applicable to the Manufacturing sector is provided (Figure 1). This sector has been selected because among the three industry areas investigated for this study, this proposed Diploma qualification received broadest support among stakeholders including industry. This framework builds on the strengths of existing qualifications referred to in this section. Features of this course structure include:

- Certificate IV VET outcome
- High level underpinning knowledge of manufacturing
- An holistic business development approach
- Application to non-metals manufacturing processes
- Major and minor studies to provide breadth of experience in the manufacturing sector

8. Conclusions

This study has sought to investigate the support for a new Diploma qualification both from the 'demand' side (students, schools and industry) and from TAFE providers. Clearly different views have emerged from the interviews undertaken and responses received.

The Discussion Paper proposed that current post-school education VET pathways may not be sufficiently broad enough to capture the needs of students and/or industry. In particular, critical underpinning knowledge is absent in some Training Packages and young people are not well equipped at the end of Year 12 to make specific vocational choices. Indeed, young people are looking for further education options that will prepare them for cognitively challenging career paths while retaining flexibility to maximise what those career paths may be.

From the investigations undertaken as part of this study there is sufficient qualitative evidence to suggest that applied learning approaches are highly desired by a large number of young students in the post-compulsory years. The popularity of the VCAL programs and the significant numbers choosing Senior VCAL (1887 in 2005) suggests that this approach has developed a 'foothold' in the post compulsory years' program options. That the majority of VCAL graduates seek applied learning options post Year 11 and Year 12, including New Apprenticeships, highlights the attractiveness of these learning models.

There is a collective view from Schools, LLENs and students themselves that significant numbers of Year 12 VCE completers are keen to further their education but have not necessarily made firm career choices that would be assisted through current VET provision and they accept Higher Education offers as a fall back position. While the original Discussion Paper suggested that the proposed Diploma qualification may be an effective pathway into further education and potentially Higher Education for VCAL completers, this investigation has found that on the whole, VCAL completers are highly motivated towards employment outcomes. It is unlikely that students completing Themed VCAL, Intermediate VCAL or Foundation VCAL would undertake a Diploma qualification as proposed. However, the commentary above does suggest that as increasing numbers of Senior VCAL students exit Victorian secondary schools, there may be growing demand for higher level, generalist courses such as the proposed Diploma. The prospective users of educational offerings were highly supportive of the proposition contained within the Discussion Paper. There was especially strong support from stakeholders interviewed in regional areas who saw a Diploma,

Figure 1 - Proposed Course Structure, Diploma of Manufacturing Technology (Working Title)

← Vocational Outcome/HE advanced standing	Semester 3	Semester 4	YEAR 2	Nominal Hours 700-800 est
	Electives	Electives		
DIPLOMA	Compulsory Technical	Compulsory Technical	YEAR 1	Nominal Hours 700-800 est
	Core	Core		
← Vocational Exit point/ Higher Education entry	Semester 1	Semester 2	YEAR 1	Nominal Hours 700-800 est
	Electives	Electives		
CERTIFICATE IV (refer Note A)	Compulsory Technical	Compulsory Technical	YEAR 1	Nominal Hours 700-800 est
	Core	Core		
	CERTIFICATE III VCE VCAL VET in VCE			

Note A: This structure includes a Certificate IV in Manufacturing Technology as an exit point at the end of Year 1.

Note B: This structure allows selection of major and minor study streams to allow flexibility for graduates to enter a variety of manufacturing enterprises. Units of competency may be drawn from:

- MCM04 Competitive Manufacturing Training Package
- PML04 Laboratory Operations Training Package
- MEM98 Metal and Engineering Industry Training Package
- PMC04 Manufactured Mineral Products Training Package
- PMA02 Chemical, Hydrocarbons and Oil Refining Training Package
- PMB02 Plastics, Rubber and Cabling Training Package
- 21635VIC Certificate IV in Applied Design in Industry

Elective competencies may also be drawn from:

- FDF03 Food Processing Industry Training Package
- LMT00 Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Training Package
- LMF02 Furnishing Industry Training Package

Stream studies comprise approximately one third of the Diploma qualification

Semester 1	Semester 2
Core	Core
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative and Statistical Skills 11 • Writing Skills • Teams Dynamics in the Workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative and Statistical Skills 2 • Research Skills • Report Writing • Development of workplace relationships
Compulsory Technical	Compulsory Technical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intro. To Manufacturing 1 - processes • Principles of Applied Design 1 – Using CAD systems • Occupational Health and Safety 1 • Quality standards in the manufacturing sector • Principles of Competitive Manufacturing 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of key processes in the manufacturing sector • Principles of Applied Design 2 – Basic graphic design skills • Occupational Health and Safety 2 • Quality control in the manufacturing sector • Principles of Competitive Manufacturing 2
Electives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical Applications in process manufacturing • Environmental Impacts in the manufacturing sector • Laboratory Operations 1 • Manufacturing Industries (see note B above) 	

Semester 3	Semester 4
Core	Core
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer relations (internal & external) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading Workplace Teams
Compulsory Technical	Compulsory Technical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production Improvement • Statistical Applications in manufacturing • Managing change in the manufacturing environment 1 • Innovation in Design • Applications of Competitive Manufacturing 1 • Environmental Sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing Quality Systems in the manufacturing sector • Managing change in the manufacturing environment 2 • Design Management • Applications of Competitive Manufacturing 2 • New Processes and their applications
Electives	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business development and sustainable business practices • Laboratory Operations 2 (analysis and interpretation) • Manufacturing Industries (see note B above) • Qualitative Applications 	

such as that proposed, offering tertiary learning in local communities without students having to bear the substantial costs of attending learning institutions in metropolitan Melbourne.

While there are matters to be addressed in negotiating articulation and credit transfer arrangements between a generalist Diploma and Higher Education offerings, the proposed Diploma has the capacity to address concerns consistently noted by the Higher Education sector that VET Training Packages are 'too narrow and too shallow'. As noted in the text, for such a Diploma to successfully articulate, partnerships need to be developed with Higher Education in the early developmental stages. This study reviewed several existing examples of curriculum and concludes that the proposed Diploma is sufficiently different both in terms of target audience and outcomes. Indeed, within the Engineering sector, Victorian qualifications have been adopted by industry and providers in preference to the Training Packages.

Within the context of this study, industry, LLENs and secondary school stakeholders interviewed with an interest in the Manufacturing sector provided support for this Diploma proposal. All stakeholder representatives from the Manufacturing sector in this study acknowledged the short comings in the current qualifications to provide underpinning knowledge to meet industry expectations. On the basis of this support a draft course structure is proposed. It was intended by the consultants to develop similar course structures for the Sport and Recreation and Community Services sectors, however, without strong support from the Sport and Recreation sector and only tacit support in the Community Services sector, it was agreed to concentrate efforts on the Manufacturing area. Although only one sample course structure is provided, other industry sectors outside the scope of this study could be investigated.

Essentially the consultants have formed the opinion that a significant number of young Victorians would prefer a qualification that reflects recognised industry standards, offers employment opportunities within a broad industry sector and which also provides sufficient generic/academic development to provide admission with significant advanced standing by Universities.

9. Recommendations

1. That the Victorian Qualifications Authority convene a Working Party to identify the rules and principles for the development of the course structure as described in Part 7 of this report. Such a Working Party would include key stakeholders from industry, Higher Education, VTA, TAFE and schools.
2. That the Victorian Qualifications Authority initiates at least one dual pathway VET Diploma qualification pilot course using the VTA Discussion Paper and this report for guidance. It is worthwhile considering using the example provided in this report as applicable to the manufacturing sector.

Appendix 1 – The Discussion Paper

VICTORIAN TAFE ASSOCIATION

EXPANDING POST SCHOOL EDUCATION PATHWAYS

DISCUSSION PAPER

Introduction

The continuing incidence of unmet demand for University places by Victorian Year 12 school completers (VCE & VCAL) raises the question of whether Victorian TAFE Institutes should provide new alternative pathways for full time post-school study. This paper outlines the case for the introduction of an additional two year full-time qualification which would combine occupationally relevant skills and knowledge with improved admission/transfer and credit arrangements for those students who, on completion, wish to further their studies at University.

Policy Context

In her 2002 statement – *Knowledge & Skills for the Innovative Economy* - the Victorian Minister for Education and Training stated the need for VET qualifications to incorporate more attention to high performance generic “employability “ skills and a more flexible tailoring of these qualifications to more quickly meet the needs of specific client groups.¹⁹ During the 2003-2005 funding triennium, TAFE Institutes have been encouraged to undertake innovative practices and programs, meeting the objectives set out in this Statement.

The Minister has also acknowledged the VET system as a pathway to higher education. Both in the VET statement²⁰ and in her companion statement on future directions for Victorian Higher Education²¹, the Minister has emphasised the need for qualifications which offer a blend of academic, vocational and generic skills not usually available in existing VET qualifications. She has committed the Government to encouraging the development and provision of qualifications that provide both VET and higher education outcomes, with full credit for study across the sectors.

The Victorian Government's response to the High Level Review of Training Packages, articulated by Schofield and McDonald²² notes that it was never the intention that Training Packages would become synonymous with VET Provision. Indeed the introduction of VCAL is an acknowledgement of the need for recognised but non-traditional and more applied learning pathways in post-compulsory schooling not directly connected to a job outcome. The Government has also signalled the need for a more blended approach to applied and academic learning to be continued in post-school/tertiary qualifications.

Current Pathways

At present the two main pathways which Victorian TAFE offers Year 12 school completers are:

¹⁹ Kosky, L., 'Ministerial Statement Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy', OTTE, 2002, p. 9

²⁰ Ibid p.10.

²¹ Kosky, L., 'Statement on future directions for Victorian Higher Education', OTTE, p. 11

²² Schofield, K and McDonald R, 'High Level Review of Training Packages Working Paper 1 The Training Package model', ANTA, 2004, p. 3

- apprenticeship/traineeships which require concurrent employment and for which the formal curriculum directly reflects and replicates the task and skill requirements of that employment
- a Certificate IV-Diploma-Advanced Diploma continuum usually based on a Year 12 equivalent entry level

An increasing number of students are enrolling in this second pathway on a full-time basis either immediately following, or within two years of, completing secondary school.

However, as presently configured, this pathway has significant and unnecessary limitations. The introduction of training packages, as the only authorised curriculum basis for these qualifications, means that over the past decade they have become increasingly tailored to highly specified employment destinations.

This degree of specificity, and the task orientation of training package assessment qualifications has been mirrored by a much reduced (and, arguably, inadequate) emphasis on the development of more generalised “underpinning knowledge”. Underpinning knowledge includes those conceptual, creative and problem-solving skills which are required both for the effective transfer of learning across highly variable employment contexts as well as for the effective continuation of occupational education to a recognised professional level.

Many intending full-time students in the 19-25 year old age group are not in a position to define their preferred career path as specifically as is required by many training packages. Other such students are actively and justifiably encouraged by their schools and their parents to maintain a level of flexibility in their post-school study path. Many such students may feel compelled to accept a University place in a field in which they have little or no interest simply because a recognised but flexible pathway in their preferred field of study is not available at TAFE. It is quite possible that such students are among those most at risk of failing or “dropping out” from University during their first year.

Equity Implications

Historically students from the lowest socio-economic quartile and from regional and rural backgrounds are already significantly under-represented in school completers' commencements at University. However, students from the same background are proportionally represented in TAFE²³.

This socio-economic segmentation is likely to be exacerbated by the rapidly escalating private cost of Australian higher education. The higher education statistical returns for the year 2002/2003 already show some (slight but absolute) decline in numbers of school completers being admitted to HECS liable places on the basis of their VCE results. Conjecturally this is attributed to the increase in costs both direct and indirect to full-time university study. If this is correct, the situation is likely to become more pronounced with the changes to HECS to be introduced from 2005.

It would therefore appear that, for less financially well-off students, a TAFE qualification may be a more viable pathway to both paraprofessional and professional qualifications than direct entry to University.

It is therefore on both aspirational and affordability grounds that many year 12 completers might benefit from the availability of a post-school qualification which reflects recognised industry standards, offers employment opportunities within a broad industry sector and which also provides sufficient generic/academic development to justify admission with significant advanced standing by Universities.

²³ Karmel, T. and Nguen, N., 'Australia's Tertiary Education Sector', CEET Conference Paper, 2003

A New Diploma Pathway Qualification

The VTA proposes the exploration of an alternative Diploma level pathway. A primary justification for this new qualification would be to provide occupationally oriented pathways with a particular focus on continuing pathways for students graduating from “themed” VCAL programs

The new pathway qualifications would thus include recognised vocational competencies drawn from one or more industry training packages within a broad industry sector. They would also include more explicit content, assessment and reporting of both basic and higher order conceptual, analytical and interpretive skills and would thus provide a “headstart” for those students wishing to further their higher education studies at a later stage.

In some ways this reflects what is currently being discussed by national bodies as a basis for the “new generation” of training packages. However, this discussion has some way to go and, at least for the next year or two, pathway qualifications as proposed here would, for the most part, sit outside the agreed rules for delivery of training packages. They will therefore need to be authorised as accredited courses.

Accreditation Options

There are two options for the accreditation of such a pathway qualification – as a VET Diploma (or an Advanced Diploma where relevant), or as an Associate Degree.

Of these, a VET Diploma is preferred because it retains the authority to accredit, assess and report within the VET sector. The balance between occupationally specific knowledge, applied and practical learning (including work placements) and more generic cognitive skill development can be appropriately designed within a sector familiar with the learning backgrounds and styles of the student cohort to which the qualification is targeted. As a VET qualification, the Diploma can be based on the same fees and charges framework as other TAFE qualifications in this sector.

Subject to relevant industry support, the AQF/AQTF arrangements continue to provide for the accreditation of VET courses leading to qualifications that may not exactly mirror a specific training package. However some industry groups may resist such pathway qualifications as leading to a dilution of the highly specified employment outcomes which characterise training packages. The frequency with which this reaction has been encountered by RTOs was a major influence leading to the inclusion of the Associate Degree qualification in the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).

The AQF guidelines for the Associate Degree represent it as a pathway qualification either to an Advanced Diploma **and/or** direct entry to the employment market at a para-professional/technician level and/or as a significant component of an existing degree program eligible for up to two years advanced standing. Thus the Associate Degree qualification intentionally provides an opportunity for TAFE Institutes (and other VET providers) to offer an additional, more generalised, middle level qualification for the school-completer cohort as described above.

Both the Ministerial Statement referred to above and the minutes of the MCEETYA meeting which approved the inclusion of Associate Degree in the AQF make it clear that Ministers expect and endorse the provision of this qualification by TAFE Institutes and private providers.

However, since the Associate Degree qualification is limited to the higher education sector, it will be necessary for TAFE Institutes wishing to offer this qualification to apply for external

accreditation through the higher education office to OTTE on a case-by-case basis. And, depending on how the AQF guideline is interpreted by (some) accrediting authorities, it may also be necessary to have specific university sponsorship for these qualifications. This could be very cumbersome.

The VET accredited Diploma pathway is therefore to be preferred. However, strong encouragement of industry support will be necessary to expedite the development and accreditation processes involved.

Precedents Elsewhere

TAFE: Over the past decade a variety of curriculum models have been introduced which seek to address the target cohort identified above. One example is the dual TAFE/University award (Victoria); another is the “2+2” model (NSW and ACT). Most of these have had a short life span since they were dependent on special grants. When the money stopped so did the programs.

It is understood that TAFE New South Wales has recently submitted for accreditation three Associate Degree courses in the Management/Business field, while Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) has introduced an Associate Degree in Applied Science, which articulates into the ANU Bachelor of Science program. CIT has also developed a number of Diploma programs that incorporate units of recognised academic study as well as core training package competencies. Other jurisdictions have developed similar arrangements to fill the discernable gap in offerings for Year 12 completers.

Private RTOs: A number of private RTOs already have arrangements with Universities, which provide 100% credit for Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas. These are often accredited by the partner universities and marketed largely to international full fee students. One example is the multi-state Melbourne/Perth/Sydney Institute of Business and Technology, which has this arrangement with Deakin, Edith Cowan and Macquarie universities respectively. Another model is the KVB Institute of Design in Sydney, which offers a fully articulated suite of qualifications including Certificate, Diploma and Bachelor’s Degree.

The interest of these RTOs in the Associate Degree appears to centre on the need to maintain their market share in the face of Training Package qualifications often not matching the requirements for progression to University.

International: Most comparable OECD countries, as well as Singapore, provide more-broadly based non-University tertiary qualifications than are currently available in Australia.

These include:

- Community College degrees and transfer degrees in the United States
- Polytechnic diplomas in Singapore and New Zealand
- Professional diplomas at Institutes of Technology in Canada
- Foundation degrees and Higher Diplomas in Further Education Colleges in England
- Higher National Diplomas in Scotland
- Technical Institute Diplomas in Germany

There is no indication that such qualifications have anything other than increased relevance and portability in the global economy for which TAFE seeks to prepare its students.

Australian Universities: Many Australian universities offer fully articulated Diploma/Degree programs through their own private companies. Again these are usually targeted at the international market and aimed at capturing students who may or may not succeed in a full degree program.

It has been a source of some irritation to TAFE Institutes that Universities are at liberty to accredit these programs without any public scrutiny, often drawing on the international market segment which also offers the most potential for TAFE.

Equally, it is anticipated that Universities and, possibly, some professional associations, will be wary of any large-scale move towards TAFE Associate Degrees for local students and that this will be seen as a “back-door” route to a “cheap” degree by those who are unsuccessful in gaining admission through the tertiary entrance selection processes.

While these concerns are largely focussed on the market positioning and revenue implications for the institutions involved, they will nevertheless need to be carefully explored and negotiated as part of taking this proposal forward.

One policy initiative, which may assist in this, is the Commonwealth's allocation of some \$36 million to universities to foster cross-sectoral partnerships (not specifically partnerships with the TAFE/VET sector). The guidelines for these funds have now been finalised by DEST and there is a reasonable prospect of some access to them for the system-wide initiative proposed herein *provided there is some support from the Government and the University sector in Victoria.*

CONCLUSION

There appears to be a strong justification for Victorian TAFE and the VQA to collaboratively explore the possibility of an alternative Diploma-level pathway. Such a Diploma may address the issues of 'choice' currently confronting Year 12 completers who, for socio-economic or other reasons are not intent on a university pathway. Further, this Diploma can provide a pathway for students graduating from 'themed' VCAL programs.

Given the above discussion, the VTA is of the opinion that a VET-accredited Diploma pathway qualification is preferred. However, VTA acknowledges that Government endorsement and strong curriculum support will be necessary to encourage industry stakeholders to support and pursue the development and accreditation of these qualifications.

RECOMMENDATION

The VTA recommends that the VTA and VQA collaborate to develop course criteria and a template, which will act as a guide for the development of pathway qualifications eligible for accreditation at the VET Diploma level.

The VTA suggests that the most appropriate areas to trial such an alternative pathway will be those where there are identified skill shortages, emerging industries and which are relatively under-provided for in training arrangements and regulatory requirements.

Appendix 2 – Stakeholder Consultations

Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE

Michael Langdon – General Manager, Educational Services
Joan McCulloch – Centre Manager - Health Access and Community Services
Dale Peacock - Centre Manager - Construction and Engineering
Cameron James – Co-ordinator, Sport and Recreation (Applied Science)

Box Hill Senior Secondary College

Anna Vlass – Acting Principal
Sandy Toohey – VCAL Co-ordinator

Chisholm Institute of TAFE

Marie Dumais – Deputy Director
Maria Peters – Associate Director, Community Services and Sport/Recreation
Pat Jones – Associate Director, Engineering, Manufacturing

Community Services and Health Recreation CMM (Swinburne)

Anne Lechte – Executive Officer

Engineering Skills Training Board Victoria Inc.

Paul Kennett – Executive Officer

Geelong College

Mary Mason, Director Teaching and Learning

Holmesglen Institute of TAFE

Bruce Mackenzie - Director
Mary Farone – Deputy Director Educational Development and Design
Sue Robertson – Associate Director, Health, Human and Community Services
Suzanne McKinnon – Teaching Centre Manager, Tourism, Sport and Recreation
Jenni Colgan – Associate Director, Applied Technology
Noel Sutcliffe – Teaching Centre Manager, Engineering and Electro-technology
Jan Lambert – VCAL Co-ordinator

Leongatha Secondary College

Student Representative Council (senior school)
Tracey Summerton – Associate Principal Senior School

Manufacturing CMM (Chisholm)

Trevor Lange

MtM Pty Ltd - Automotive Components Manufacturing

Carolyn Kibell - Director

RMIT University

Sally Leavold – Acting Head, School of Education

Service Industry Skills Training Board Limited

Glen Cowan – Executive Officer Hospitality/Tourism
Barbara Hawkins – Executive Officer WRAPS

Smart Geelong Regional LLEN

Anne-Marie Ryan – Executive Officer

South Gippsland Careers Teachers' Network

Di Mueller – Leongatha Secondary College
Anne Hendry – Korumburra Secondary College
Alice O'Mara – Mirboo North Secondary College
Margot – South Gippsland Secondary College

South Gippsland/Bass Coast LLEN

Carolyn Kibell – Executive Officer

South East Local Learning and Employment Network

Paul Di Masi – Executive Officer

Sport and Recreation CMM (Swinburne)

Lina Robinson – Executive Officer

Swinburne University of Technology

Professor Barbara Van Ernst – Deputy Vice Chancellor
Carlo de Martinis -Manager Specialist Centre in Manufacturing

Victoria University

Elizabeth Davidson – CMM (General Studies and Further Education)
Tess Demediuk - Director, Staff Learning and Educational Development
Rose Lewanski – VETiS Project Officer – Student Career Services
Belinda McLennan - Pro Vice Chancellor,
Jane McLennan – HOD Sport and Recreation
Kevin Roche – Deputy Director TAFE
Diane Williams – Associate Director, School of Engineering, Construction and Industrial Skills
Dr Carolyn Woodley – Quality Teaching and Innovation Unit, Staff Learning and Educational Development

Victorian Community Services and Health Industry Training Board Inc.

Brian Spencer – CEO

Victorian Cultural & Recreation Industry Training Board Ltd (VERVE)

Cindy Tschernitz – CEO
Liz Mulconry- Sport and Recreation Officer

Victorian Process Manufacturing Industries Training Board Inc.

John Mollenaar – CEO

Victorian Qualifications Authority

David Gallagher – VCAL Project Manager

Appendix 3 – Guiding Questions

Guiding Questions for Interviews with TAFE providers

1. Tell me about your program delivery in the following areas: Diplomas/Advanced Diplomas do you offer in Manufacturing / Sport /Recreation / Community Services (excluding Aged Care)?
 - a. How many places in each?
 - b. Number of applicants for each (approximate figures only)?
 - c. Do you believe that there is a high level of unmet demand in your area?
 - d. How many students would go on to Higher Education after first year of the Diploma?
 - e. How many complete the Diploma and only look for employment? ie do not have Higher Ed aspirations?
 - f. What are the reasons students nominate for applying for this course?
 - g. What percentage would have been applying to TAFE only because they couldn't get into a University?
 - h. Has the advent of Training Packages affected the level of applications and the background of students?
 - i. Do you believe that many students are influenced by the specifically vocational nature of the Training Package qualifications? Elicit positive and negative aspects.
 - j. What are the advantages of qualifications and courses in this area?
 - k. What are the disadvantages of qualifications and courses in this area?
 - l. Do you think that the current courses offer accessible pathways into Higher Ed for those students who aspire to a Degree?
 - m. Do you know what level of credit is gained by students who transfer part way through the Diploma (ie after Cert.IV) or at the completion of the Diploma?
2. What was your initial reaction to the proposed Diploma qualification outlined in the Discussion Paper?
3. Is there a need for a different type of Diploma level qualification in TAFE in the broad area of manufacturing / community services / sport/recreation (Whichever is applicable) which would enable both a vocational outcome and also an articulation pathway into Higher Education?
4. If so, what would you call the new course and how would you differentiate it from the existing Diplomas?

Guiding Questions for Interviews with ITB CEOs

1. What was your initial reaction to the idea presented in the Discussion Paper?
2. Tell me about the qualifications in the Training Packages used by the industry you represent.
 - a. What qualifications are in the Training Packages?
 - b. How well are they currently meeting student needs?
 - c. Is there sufficient emphasis on the underpinning skills and knowledge in these Training Package qualifications?
3. Are these qualifications meeting industry needs? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the current qualifications?
4. Are the AQF 5 qualifications meeting the needs of those students who aspire to higher level qualifications in the field – ie can they be used for entry into higher education courses?
5. Are there any deficiencies in the current courses which are preventing students from achieving an appropriate level of articulation? How could these deficiencies be remedied?
6. If the proposal as outlined was introduced, how would you anticipate being able to differentiate such a program from already existing programs?
7. Would it cause any issues in the market place in terms of student recognition?

Guiding Questions for Interviews – Schools and VCAL Representatives

1. Tell me about your experiences with delivery of VCAL programs
 - a. How many VCAL programs do you run?
 - b. In what areas, ie are they themed or general?
 - c. How many students do you have?
2. Tell me about your students:
 - a. Do you believe they are making informed vocational choices in Year 12?
 - b. What key factors influence the choices they make post year 12?
 - c. What barriers are present for your students to undertake further education?
 - d. Would a Diploma such as the one proposed in the Discussion Paper benefit your students? (details elicited)
 - e. What destination 'picture' can you provide of your exit students?
 - f. What are the most popular destinations?

- g. Do many aspire to the following areas – Manufacturing, Community Services and/or Sport and Recreation?
3. What is initial your reaction to the ideas and proposal in the paper?
4. Do you or your students have any issues with the nature of TAFE Diplomas - ie are they perceived as narrowly vocational?
5. Are many students unable to enter further education of their choice?
6. What do you see as the advantages/disadvantages of the proposed Diploma outlined in the Discussion paper?

Guiding Discussion – Focus group of Year 12 students

Approximately 20 minutes was spent explaining to the students the nature of the investigation. Prepared questions were clearly not suitable and the discussion was unstructured and free flowing. Students attending were all undertaking VCE. Discussion considered:

1. Future plans (work/further study/mixture/deferment)
2. Learning preferences
3. The ability of current choices to satisfy their needs (nb: VTAC Guide not available at this stage but all students had completed a range of careers education programs in years 10 and 11)
4. Barriers to further study

Guiding Discussion – Executive Officers Local Learning and Employment Networks

Interviews occurred by telephone and face-to-face.

1. Tell me about your client group/s
2. What was your initial reaction to the ideas presented in the Discussion Paper?
3. Do you believe the rationale presented in the paper is sound?
4. Would such a Diploma qualification affect student retention in your region?
5. Would such a Diploma qualification gain broad industry support in your region?