



## Stronger Future for all Victorians

The Victorian TAFE Association (VTA) welcomes the chance to respond to the discussion paper on the youth transitions system 'Stronger futures for all young Victorians'.

Membership of the VTA includes four multi-sector universities, fourteen stand-alone TAFE providers and associate members the Centre for Adult Education (CAE) and AMES. VTA members will, in many instances, respond individually to the discussion paper to highlight areas of particular interest to their organisations. This response is based on comments provided directly to the VTA by members. That said, the diversity of the membership of the VTA needs to be acknowledged and some divergent views may exist that have not been provided to the VTA.

The VTA appreciates the opportunities provided by the DEECD/DIIRD Joint Policy Unit on Youth Transitions for input by the VTA and Victorian TAFE providers. The commentary below reaffirms the views expressed in oral consultations.

The approach taken in this response is to consider each of the sections of the discussion paper and the specific questions where VTA holds a particular view.

### HOW DO WE CONTINUE TO IMPROVE THE CURRENT YOUTH TRANSITIONS SYSTEM?

#### Strengthening literacy and numeracy in the post-compulsory years

##### Question 1: What form should the proposed literacy and numeracy standards take?

Whatever standards are adopted consideration should be given to a broader understanding of literacy and numeracy for different contexts, in particular functional literacy for employability, further education and/or life skills. In relation to the concept of literacy standards for employability caution is advised to ensure the standards do not create barriers to employment by proposing literacy standards that may be unachievable. It is realistic to expect that the support needed by individual students to achieve literacy standards may vary significantly in the quantum, timing and location of that support; and this should be reflected in the funding provided.

VTA draws attention to the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) used in the VET context to map and report language, literacy and numeracy skills (LL&N). ACSF as identified by Chisholm Institute in its response to the discussion paper, *"is the fundamental tool to commonly identify, report and thus speak about levels of competence in relation to LL&N either as stand-alone skills or in the context of training and/or workplace requirements. This framework potentially could be used to map across the skills required for the senior secondary certificates thus bridging the requirements and reporting language of the two sectors."*

Any standards must be unambiguous and it is important that they embrace a wide definition of foundation literacy and numeracy to include language standards that recognize the cultural diversity among the Victorian post-compulsory student cohort. TAFE Institutes map to the ACSF in the development of customized tools for local use. VTA recommends that these approaches are explored further in the context of this issue.

While the scope of this discussion paper is the post-compulsory years, it may also be timely to consider more widely the application of literacy and numeracy standards for exit from compulsory schooling and not just a feature of senior secondary school qualifications.

### **Question 2: In what other ways can the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills be strengthened in the post-compulsory years?**

The integration of LL&N into all teaching practices has proven an effective model to raise standards among VET students in the 16-20 age group. The Technical Education Centres (TEC) established as part TAFE Institutes are exploring delivery models to better integrate LL&N into daily learning activities. LL&N is not seen as a separate 'subject' isolated from other content areas. LL&N needs to be a feature of curriculum, competencies and assessment. This view has been supported by recommendations contained in the report of the NQC 'VET Products for the 21st Century'.<sup>1</sup> At Swinburne University an employability passport is a feature of the learning design and the University of Ballarat TEC Job Ready Card is used more broadly for attesting to work-readiness.

Underpinning any systemic changes to embed LL&N teaching practices will be the need to ensure that teachers have the appropriate LL&N themselves and the teaching skills to impart these learnings to students whether in a school or a TAFE setting. The capacity to embed LL&N into teaching practices must be a fundamental component of pre-service teacher training and VET teaching qualifications. Pre-service teacher training has an important role to play in instilling a sense of ownership in teachers for having a responsibility for the LL&N of students.

Including LL&N in all pre-service teacher training will create generational change in education but there must also be immediate and intense actions by government to build the skills of the existing teaching workforce. Within the TAFE sector organisations have taken it upon themselves to grow the LL&N skills of teachers. VTA members observe that skilled LL&N professionals are difficult to find and particularly scarce in regional areas. If TAFE providers are to invest in the professional development of teaching staff to build LL&N among younger students, they need the research and resources (tools) to build these skills locally.

Anecdotal information provided to VTA identifies a priority target group as those young students who *won't* engage in LL&N. Observations by TAFE staff are that many young students who *won't* engage in LL&N need high levels of pastoral care and innovative teaching practices to motivate them.

VTA notes that the DEECD hosts a Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat and requests an opportunity to discuss with relevant officers the potential for TAFE practitioners to enhance /contribute VET knowledge in this area; and to access resources and professional development.

### **Support for making informed education and training choices**

#### **Question 1: Will a career plan strengthen young people's engagement with education and their capacity to make informed study and career choices both during schooling and in subsequent education, training and employment settings?**

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[http://www.nqc.tvetaustralia.com.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/49657/VET\\_Products\\_for\\_the\\_21st\\_Century\\_-\\_FINAL\\_REPORT.pdf](http://www.nqc.tvetaustralia.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/49657/VET_Products_for_the_21st_Century_-_FINAL_REPORT.pdf)

VTA agrees that young people who have considered a range of career options and have some inkling of future life beyond school appear to engage more purposefully with education. In the TAFE context many providers develop individual learning plans with students. A feature of many of these plans is the opportunity for experiential learning and structured workplace based learning. The VTA notes this type of delivery model in the TECs across Victoria and in VCAL programs delivered by TAFE providers. In view of this we consider that experiential learning/delivery models are critical to successful youth transitions and outcomes, and contribute to higher levels of work readiness.

We acknowledge that experiential learning/structured workplace learning is resource intensive (facilities/human resources) but this should not be a barrier to further exploration of this area.

VTA would encourage broader thinking around individual learning plans rather than just career plans as many young people lack the maturity or foresight to plan in their teens for a specific career/occupation.

### **Question 2: What other actions should be taken to ensure that sound career development services are available to all young Victorians?**

Any career/learning planning activities must be dynamic, well resourced and regular. They should not be ad hoc such as the occasional one-to-one with a careers counselor, materials in a library or 'careers' room or attending a mandatory career education class. Effective career planning in tandem with a learning plan should include the exploration of non-linear pathways with multiple entry and exit points in formal education, training and employment.

All careers counselors should hold qualifications for that role. The VTA remains concerned that careers educators do not have sufficient experience, or contemporary understanding, of the VET sector and their advice is limited by their own university education experiences. As the common pathway into career counseling at schools is from classroom teaching pre-service training for all teachers should include consideration of VET, applied learning and the relationship of specific disciplines to career options. In addition all subsequent qualifications for careers counselors must include a significant exposure to the VET sector both in theory and practice. Further, careers counseling should not only be funded through the schools sector but should be universally and freely available to all young people to the age of 25 enrolled in education.

### **Question 3: How can business/industry be more involved in assisting students' career choices?**

The VET policy statement *Securing Jobs for Your Future* establishes the Skills For Growth program to focus on workforce development across industry sectors in Victoria. Opportunities exist to leverage from the Skills For Growth program for the benefit of youth. The Skills For Growth program includes free workforce development/training plans for businesses. This program could provide points of entry for employers to engage with brokers in discussions regarding youth employment. TAFE providers note that not all employers demonstrate a commitment to raising the skills of the student via structured workplace learning experiences treating it as a work experience taster rather than using the students' talents and capabilities. The newly appointed workplace learning co-ordinators also have an opportunity to educate employers; and there needs to be strong links between workplace learning co-ordinators and TAFEs.

Traditionally the focus has been on preparing young people for the workplace and not on preparing employers (the workplace) for young people – attention must be given to both aspects of work preparation. Workplace learning co-ordinators are well placed as the bridge between RTOs (including TAFE), schools and employers.

Regional Economic Development Plans may be also a vehicle for dialogue with industry on youth issues and education. The principle in existing government procurement policy that requires apprentices to be employed on government funded capital works programs could be extended to youth in other government funded programs/projects.

## **ARRANGEMENTS THAT SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE TO COMPLETE QUALIFICATIONS**

### **Further strengthening completions in the school sector and the VET sector**

#### **Question 1: What would further strengthen the delivery partnerships between government and non-government schools and between schools and VET providers?**

VTA will comment in relation to strengthening partnerships between schools and TAFE providers. Two suggestions are offered:

- Delivery partnerships have flourished in the VETiS programs but still tensions exist because of the costs of VETiS programs and students, particularly from lower SES backgrounds, are disenfranchised because of tuition fees based on fee-for-service arrangements. Partnerships will be enhanced if systemically these programs are fully government funded.
- School teachers' own educational experiences are unlikely to have directly included the TAFE sector. VTA suggests that Promotions Officers employed by TAFE attend at least 1 School PD event or staff meeting at all Schools within their catchment area each year to educate and inform all teachers of the course offerings and options in the TAFE / VET system. The Promotions Officers would not just be marketers but people with underpinning understanding of TAFE / VET and education delivery and the scope and diversity of qualifications offered and the occupational outcomes of qualifications.

The model for Technical Education Centres (TECs) as specialist centres for VET youth delivery is worthy of attention. An evaluation of the TEC initiative is currently underway by Skills Victoria and the outcome of the evaluation would be worthy of reference in informing future government policy on youth transitions.

It has also been noted by VTA members involved in Trade Training Centre (TTC) partnership bids, that the process of requiring consortia arrangements has encouraged partnerships between schools (government and non-government) and VET providers. While the sustainability of these partnerships is yet to be proven, there may be lessons learned from this approach in funding innovations in youth education.

At the heart of any policy innovation to create sustained partnerships between schools and TAFE must be systems that allow and encourage students to move back and forth between educational settings/types. Current systems and most noticeably funding arrangements frustrate these initiatives. Accountability and funding arrangements for youth in transition could be improved. There may be merit in reviewing funding arrangements for young people choosing to transition to TAFE before completing either Year 11 and 12 to enable funding to follow the student. The different funding arrangements (schools with a focus on census dates/TAFE focus on student contact hours) could contribute to a situation where advice to students is not based on the best interests of the students because they are made mindful of funding methodologies. Current arrangements impact negatively on the relationships between schools and TAFE and provide a perverse incentive for young people to stay at school. The VTA is maintaining a watching brief on the national debate proposing that certificate qualifications to Certificate II or III are fully funded by government. The OECD Review of

VET in Australia (2008) made a recommendation to this effect and adding that there should be no charge to the learner.

## **Question 2: What additional actions should Government take to support young people to complete initial qualifications in the VET sector?**

### **Apprentices and trainees**

The Discussion Paper highlights that non-completion of qualifications in employment based VET pathways, such as apprenticeships and traineeships, are more complex than those of students in institutional pathways (p.24). Issues such as employment conditions, effective and supportive workplace learning environments are cited. It is further stated that a high proportion of those who fail to complete their apprenticeship drop out in the first 12 months (p.24). The report mentions the role of Apprenticeship Field Officers that provide a range of support including dispute resolution (p.25). The Discussion Paper also mentions pastoral care of apprentices, mentoring and advice and support for workplace supervisors that all have the potential to improve apprenticeship completions (p.25). The VTA is in discussion with Skills Victoria, peak employer bodies, the AEU and the Alannah and Madeline Foundation about a proposal targeted to improve the health and wellbeing of apprentices in workplaces; and in turn raise the retention of apprentices and trainees. The rationale behind this proposal is that there have been far too many instances of serious bullying, harassment and sexual harassment both direct and indirect that have had adverse implications for apprentices and trainees in the workplace, their employers and their families. The program is proposed to be highly educative with the intention to produce better informed apprentices/trainees and employers.

### **Securing Jobs for Your Future**

2010 is a year of transition for the VET sector as the funding moves from a model based on provision to one responding to market demand. New policy levers are being applied regarding the eligibility criteria for government funding support for VET qualifications. These criteria include government funding being linked to enrolments at qualification levels above those already held. While these requirements do not concern a person below the age of 20, VTA is already receiving anecdotal information that funding changes in VET in Victoria are leading to a subtext of discussions about career plans/learning plans where the student is counselled not to complete a qualification so as to leave government funded options open in the future. This is not the intent of VET policy or youth policy yet the eligibility criteria is unintentionally causing this type of thinking in communities. The VTA response to Securing Jobs for Your Future Implementation Review 2010 recommends the abolition of this eligibility requirement and that this issue should be addressed as a matter of urgency before full implementation of the reforms in 2011.

The VTA response to Securing Jobs for Your Future Implementation Review 2010 can be viewed at:

[http://www.vta.vic.edu.au/docs/VTA\\_Response\\_to\\_Review\\_of\\_Implementation\\_Securing\\_Jobs\\_FTf.pdf](http://www.vta.vic.edu.au/docs/VTA_Response_to_Review_of_Implementation_Securing_Jobs_FTf.pdf)

### **Structural arrangement**

Earlier in this response the importance of high quality structured workplace based learning experiences were highlighted as critical to enhanced work readiness. Structural arrangements in the TAFE sector are designed to accommodate the needs of students wanting to learn part-time and work part-time. The same cannot be said of the schools' system. VTA encourages a rethinking of schooling arrangements that encourages students who want to study part-time and engage in the workforce.

**Question 3: Would greater levels of institutional specialisation in curriculum and qualification delivery result in improved quality of provision, and support increased student attainment of Year 12 or an equivalent vocational qualification?**

One model that may be worthy of review in the current context is the district provision model. In this model local access options provide students with choices of different educational settings including alternative government schools, non-government schools, TAFE, secondary schools, and ACE settings. The current generalist model can result in a lack of diversity in programs. Research shows culturally minimalist offerings in lower socio economic demographics and sometimes in rural and regional settings – for instance, limited opportunities in the creative and performing arts. A single institution cannot offer all things to all people – it is forced to appeal to the mainstream and reduces offerings to ensure viable numbers or alternatively, it has to be a very large.

It may be possible to use the district provision model to offer a broader scope of options to assist both with student retention and student engagement – both precursors to improved student completion of qualifications. This option may suit metropolitan arrangements with a population density to support a range of providers in a local area. The same will not necessarily apply in regional and rural areas.

While the question asks for consideration of *institutional specialization*, an opportunity exists within the context of *Stronger futures for all young Victorians* to review VCAL particularly to enhance the current senior VCAL to include specialized vocational studies aligned to emerging, hi-tech vocations (eg robotics).

**Question 4: How should schools, VET providers and system authorities use the new transparency and accountability arrangements in Victorian schools and the Victorian Student Number to improve the completion rate of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications?**

VTA is not well qualified to comment on this question.

**Question 5: What other strategies could be introduced to lift qualification completion rates for young people in the schools and VET sectors?**

At the outset students need access to qualified careers professionals and online information that is current and accurate. Sound advice and quality information will provide a platform for qualifications choices that have greater prospects of completion. Parents, family and friends also influence students' choices and sustained communications strategies need to be directly targeted to these groups.

Several strategies adopted by TAFE providers have provided some success in raising completions of qualifications:

**Pastoral Care**

VTA members note in the case of VCAL, high levels of pastoral care appear to have paid dividends in engaging the students to complete qualifications. Wodonga Institute of TAFE has designed the learning for the VCAL cohort (approximately 100 students) which includes high levels of support at the front-end to set a firm basis for interaction and relationship building. Over time the level of support may diminish but it needs to be firmly in place at the beginning to engage each learner and agree individual learning goals. Earlier in this response we made mention of using individual learning plans to manage learning. These have the added benefit of providing a focus for completing a qualification. VTA is supportive of the Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) initiative to maintain the engagement of young people with VET.

## **High Level Teaching Skills**

Within the context of this question it is worth reiterating the need to ensure the existing teaching workforce in schools and VET settings have the underpinning skills and knowledge to teach contemporary young Victorians. Goulburn Ovens TAFE (GOTAFE) CEO Paul Culpan noted in a recent focus group that GOTAFE is the largest school provider in that region and TAFE staff need higher level (and different) teaching skills to enable them to interact effectively with school students. Members of the VET workforce who may be reluctant to teach outside their vocational area could be a focus for professional development that will build pedagogical skills that in turn enable them to enhance the student learning experience, raise motivational levels and qualifications completions.

## **Training Package Qualifications**

Industry specific Training Packages form the basis of the delivery of VET qualifications. Training Packages by their very nature have a narrow vocational approach to skills and knowledge development that may not be the best vocational education approach for young people yet to make firm career choices. The 'fit' of training packages to the VET needs of young people may need to be reviewed.

## **Victorian VET Policy**

Changes to eligibility criteria for access to government funding for VET programs may impact on completions of qualifications (see response to Question 2 above: Securing Jobs for Your Future). Ideally the eligibility criteria should be restricted to citizenship and residency status only. But if age is a feature of determining eligibility, there should be open access to government funded VET programs across the AQF up the age of 24 at least, rather than the current barrier at age 20. TAFE providers are monitoring changes in enrolment patterns including qualifications completions as the VET policy reforms are implemented. It is too early for trend data to appear but anecdotally the VTA has been advised that in regional East Gippsland the policy may be disengaging young men more so than young women.

## **Testing existing skills/knowledge**

VTA supports growing trends to complement VTAC selection processes for higher level VET courses and university courses with other selection methods including interviews, portfolio presentations and aptitude assessment. VTA is concerned that current approaches do not best service the VET sector and that the ENTER is not necessarily a good predictor of success in tertiary education. In addition to integrated LL&N development, VTA suggests that wider use of aptitude assessments prior to enrolment in qualifications may identify areas of strength and areas for developmental assistance. Capitalising on strengths and working towards addressing developmental needs will ultimately enhance qualifications completions.

## **Question 6: How can businesses and industry be involved in increasing completion rates – especially for apprenticeships?**

The current policy initiatives have contributed to boosting commencements and completions linked to financial incentives to employers and apprentices achieving certain milestones for some industries. The Victorian government is to be congratulated for changing policy to enable out-of-work apprentices to continue with off-the-job training in the past two years in response to the Global Financial Crisis.

Attention needs to be focused on young people preparing for the transition to work and industry has a vital role to play by offering well structured workplace experiences for this

cohort. Moving beyond mere 'work experience' to providing a meaningful experience that includes coaching, mentoring and applied practices. While much work has been done to enable school students entry into workplaces, government policy could be more flexible to enable structured workplace learning outside traditional school structures to include weekends, term breaks and to match the hours of operation of some industries/businesses.

Mention was made earlier of the need to prepare the employer for the student as much as preparing the student for the workplace based experience. The models adopted by the TECs across the state, while unique in each context, demonstrate a range of approaches to better engage industry in vocational learning and are a good point of reference in this instance.

Finally, the health and wellbeing of young people once they have entered into structured workplace arrangements cannot be overlooked. VTA has been working closely with industry and government in recent months to undertake research and potentially to develop training activities and resources to support industries' engagement with young workers with the aim of improving employee/employer satisfaction and completion of qualifications.

## **SYSTEMS THAT ASSIST STUDENTS TO MOVE EFFECTIVELY BETWEEN COURSES, INSTITUTIONS AND SECTORS**

### **Articulation from school to VET and higher education**

#### **Question 1: How can student transition to the VET sector, higher education and full-time employment be improved?**

This response has already touched on matters relevant to this question including:

- Depth and breadth of career planning and development of individual learning plans
- Review of processes solely using ENTER for selection processes
- Greater pastoral care for 'at risk' young people and apprentices
- Sustained organisational partnerships between the VET and HE sector and with industries
- Review of government policies including *Securing Jobs for Your Future*
- Professional development for careers counselors and education of influential adults
- Consideration of LL&N standards
- Student centred models adopted by TECs across the state

In addition there needs to be absolute clarity of understanding of pathways and outcomes. In this area there is scope for improvement. For example, policy directions are providing conflicting messages about the equivalence of senior secondary qualifications. On one hand Certificate II AQF qualifications are described as 'equivalent' and other examples use Certificate III as the point of comparison. The VTA proposes that equivalence be linked to the purpose of the VET qualification and a blanket rule about equivalence cannot be made.

Public access to information needs to provide clarity and balance around VET, HE and employment options. Successful transition to VET is inextricably linked to educating parents about applied learning methods and pathways outcomes. Exposure to the benefits of applied learning need to occur early in the secondary school experiences so that parents and students build an understanding of applied learning and pathways



to/from learning qualifications and can see the progression from secondary to tertiary education.

Establishing these understandings would assist to create certainty in parents' minds, about the outcomes of these courses and enable them to confidently support their children to make better choices. Internet based information will be preferred by the vast majority of young people and increasingly, their parents. Media sites such as SkillsOne (see <http://www.skillsone.com.au/>) are important sources of information about careers and VET linkages. There also needs to be readily available up-to-date information about the supply of available and potential jobs. DIIRD has the capacity to provide this information to assist young people making qualification choices. TAFE providers are reporting to VTA that under the student entitlement funding model for VET being rolled out in Victoria there has been a surge in enrolments in Business, Arts and Sport and Recreation. Typically occupations suiting these qualifications are not experiencing skills shortages and there is likely to be an oversupply of students for jobs available. If an open market model is to apply the market needs to be fully informed and government has a responsibility in this instance to provide that source of information.

The Review of the AQF is yet to be published but the outcomes may provide an improved qualification framework with greater emphasis on applied vocational higher education qualifications and pathways requirements including seamless transitions from VET to HE, HE to VET and subsequently into employment.

### **Question 2: What other steps are required to assist schools' connection to the world of work?**

Strategies have been suggested in the preceding commentary but VTA would like to re-emphasise the good practice being applied in Victoria's TECs / Vocational Colleges and recommends widening that model to include consortia arrangements with TAFE as the lead agent.

On a practical level frequent involvement of industry in schools, through a range of engagement strategies and project based learning activities, for students from 9-12 would build linkages between employers and schools. Consideration might also be given to a potential role for the TECs at the middle school years.

### **Question 3: What other initiatives would improve school to tertiary education articulation and support young people to take advantage of the expansion of these sectors?**

At the VTA Focus Group discussion on June 10, one TAFE CEO described the importance of a *clear line of sight* for students and their parents to see what the future may look like based on certain choices. Initiatives to support a clear line of sight must include changing community perceptions that education does not occur in silos as schools, TAFE or universities; rather that movement from one stage of education to another is seamless and effortless. Transparent pathways and articulation arrangements are critical. One scenario may be where a single entity provides senior secondary, VET and HE with seamless transitions and guaranteed pathways.

A current example of this type of institutional reform is at Swinburne where Swinburne VET diploma students are guaranteed entry to a Bachelor degree on enrolment. Wider application of this approach requires institutional change (TAFE and HE) and partnership models (Schools/TAFE). A clear alignment of primary, secondary, VET and HE need to be created. At local levels communities are providing leadership to create alignment but systems don't support these innovations and/or don't provide financial incentives for them to occur.

## **Articulation within the VET sector and from VET to higher education**

### **Question 1: Should efforts to improve VET to higher education articulation and credit arrangements focus on particular occupational pathways and skills priority areas, for example in engineering and nursing?**

VTA members have not expressed a consensus view on whether arrangements to focus on particular occupational pathways and skills priority areas are preferred. As a general comment, skills priority areas change and articulation arrangements are not necessarily nimble enough to respond quickly to those changes. A broad brush approach maximizing opportunities where VET and HE demonstrate willingness to create pathways may be preferred. Many VTA members have recalled the successful outcomes of the Victorian Tertiary Orientation Program (TOP) in preparing students for tertiary study. A new TOP may feature the development of transitional 'academic' learning programs at TAFE in the last year of course; separate but concurrent 'academic' learning programs; or a pre-University orientation program learning.

### **Question 2: How can governments ensure that reforms to the VET and higher education sector address both skill needs and student demand for particular qualifications?**

The VTA response to the review of the implementation of *Securing Jobs for Your Future* ([http://www.vta.vic.edu.au/docs/VTA\\_Response\\_to\\_Review\\_of\\_Implementation\\_Securing\\_Jobs\\_FTF.pdf](http://www.vta.vic.edu.au/docs/VTA_Response_to_Review_of_Implementation_Securing_Jobs_FTF.pdf)) highlights the shortcomings of the policy initiative and in particular notes the lack of certainty that a market driven model can deliver the skills needed to meet Victoria's skills needs. Two of the goals for the new skills system are to ensure Victorian businesses have workers with the right skills to the right level. Before July 1, 2009, training was purchased by the Victorian Skills Commission following the agreement of performance outcomes with each TAFE provider. Typically these agreements targeted delivery to certain industries; age cohorts; and areas of economic need.

The new skills system is based on a student entitlement (demand driven model). The VTA remains unconvinced that market forces alone will provide Victoria with the skills base necessary to meet industry needs. Already VTA members report growth in diploma enrolments in areas not designated as skills shortages area; ICT, Business, the Arts and Sport and Recreation. Typically people plan career choices based on their passions and talents without forensic investigation of the employment market in their chosen field. At the Commonwealth level models have been proposed that include a proportion of targeted purchased training and a proportion of training funded on the basis of demand.

The VTA recommended that Review presents an opportunity to examine enrolment data since the introduction of the new skills system to identify the degree to which training is occurring in areas of recognised skills shortages. This data may also inform discussions on effective youth transition systems. VTA is also concerned that in a market driven training system price will strongly influence qualifications choices and that skills development in areas of shortages may not occur if qualifications in these areas attract higher tuition fees.

### **Question 3: How can governments improve provision and articulation arrangements to better support young people, especially in regional and rural areas, to access tertiary qualifications without needing to re-locate?**

VTA has provided in-principle support to the recommendations in the Bradley Review and the Report advising on the development of the Victorian Tertiary Education Plan that promote partnerships and increased provision of VET and HE in regional areas. Current policy drivers are creating the environment where partnerships can be supported in

regional and rural areas. Linking funding to partnership arrangements is likely to be an effective lever. TAFE providers are already offering degree programs under auspicing arrangements with universities and TAFE providers can offer vocational degrees and more of these arrangements in regional Victoria will broaden offerings for young people in these areas.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO RE-ENGAGE WITH EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

### **Question 1: How can Youth Connections be implemented in Victoria to most effectively re-engage young people with education and training?**

The VTA is not well enough acquainted with the Youth Connections initiative to comment but encourages full and frequent dialogue with TAFE providers as major players in education to young people.

### **Question 2: What services should Youth Connection service providers use to establish effective referral and working arrangements?**

The VTA is not well enough acquainted with the Youth Connections initiative to comment but encourages full and frequent dialogue with TAFE providers as major players in education to young people.

### **Question 3: Should LLENs be provided some flexibility to facilitate and broker service provision to young people 20 and over, in line with the flexibility in Youth Connections service provision?**

The VTA is not well enough acquainted with the Youth Connections initiative to comment but encourages full and frequent dialogue with TAFE providers as major players in education to young people.

### **Question 4: Is the range of qualifications on offer to re-engage young people adequate? (Existing qualifications include VCAL, adult VCE, the General Certificate of Adult Education and the Diploma of Further Education.)**

A limited definition of qualifications on offer to re-engage young people is presented in this question. Other accredited qualifications would have a place in this group including the Course in Applied Vocational Study Skills (CAVSS) and the Course in Concurrent Study. Taking a broader interpretation of the question, the characteristics of any qualification on offer to re-engage young people must be characterized by high levels of flexibility and customization accommodating multiple entry and exit points, part or full time study plus the ability for training providers in a range of settings to tailor programs in terms of content and delivery approaches for individual student needs. In addition, as suggested on p.9 of this submission, consideration of a new tertiary orientation program, and revisiting this form of qualification as a Year 12 equivalent would be a worthwhile initiative.

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