

Towards the State Election 2015

KEY ISSUE 4

Support for vocational education and training in schools (VETiS)

Additional Information

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission has sought to highlight four areas where it believes there are opportunities to improve VET delivery and outcomes for students, and in doing so, help build a highly skilled workforce and contribute to keeping Queensland's economy strong.

1. Increase student access to VET programs in regional and rural settings.

The quality of VET delivery for students in regional and rural settings often depends on locality and numbers of students. Rural and regional schools are reporting that employers are scaling back on their engagement and support for school programs, particularly work experience placements and SATs, due to less favourable economic circumstances. Furthermore, the small cohort sizes in some rural schools makes delivery by a pre-qualified supplier unattractive. There is an opportunity to provide initiatives for students in rural and regional settings with targeted support to access training in other localities and provide greater industry placement options.

2. Expand the list of qualifications funded in the 'Employment Stream' to provide greater breadth of suitable pathways for girls to transition to post-school training and employment outcomes.

The Employment Stream List of qualifications is concentrated across industries associated with traditional trades and generally provides multiple entry points to those industries. Whilst it is accepted that girls have opportunity to access this training, there is less opportunity for girls to access training in many employment areas that have traditionally attracted females.

In 2013 there were 10,443 Year 12 school leavers in Queensland Catholic Schools. The 2014 Next Step Destination Survey for Queensland Catholic schools indicated that 641 males (or 24.3% of male respondents) and 223 females (or just 7.3% of female respondents) undertook an apprenticeship or traineeship in their post-school year. In the same cohort, females completed 488 fewer Certificate I and II qualifications than males.

An example of a qualification that could be included on the Employment Stream List to redress this bias is;

- SIH20111 Certificate II in Hairdressing

Whilst it is appreciated that the Employment Stream List does not contain Certificate III level qualifications, it may also be useful to include specific Certificate III level qualifications in Child Care, Beauty and Aged Care on the list as lower level qualifications are not offered in these areas.

3. More appropriately assist schools that are delivering higher cost VET courses.

Both researchⁱ and experience in schools have indicated that there is variability around the cost of VET delivery in the school context. Cost structures are affected by a range of factors including the mode of delivery, the course content and the student cohort size. It is clear that VET courses that require a high level of technical instruction including skill-based training in equipment and tools and smaller cohort size are more expensive to deliver than general education courses. It has been suggested that the additional cost may be up to 1.5 timesⁱⁱ more expensive than general education courses. It is also the case that the higher cost courses are generally the courses that have been identified as providing pathways to further training and employment and often in identified skill shortage areas.

A useful starting point would be to commission a research project to determine the cost of delivery for VET that includes delivery to impart technical skills.

A related issue is the shortage of qualified VET trainers in schools and limited opportunities for training at Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Traditionally VET trainers in schools have entered the teaching profession after a career in industry and the prospect of three years of full time study and the corresponding Higher Education Contribution Scheme debt are a significant barrier. A way forward would be to offer targeted support for skilled tradespeople to enter and continue with pre-service teacher training.

4. Provide targeted or seed funding to schools to develop additional career development programs.

The National Career Research Development Strategy Green Paper (2012) noted that; '*... career development that has career self-management skills at its heart is now widely accepted in OECD countries as a necessary foundation for labour market flexibility and lifelong learning.*'ⁱⁱⁱ The paper continued; '*The benefits of a lifelong career path (through school, from school to further education, training and employment, throughout a working life) for individuals with timely, quality career development support, have long been understood. Those benefits include increased confidence, better informed decisions, smoother transitions to employment or further education and, higher job satisfaction.*'^{iv}

Opportunities may include;

- Funding of innovative career development initiatives in schools
- Increased support for work experience and structured workplace learning placements
- Support for initiatives to develop capacity of teachers to assist career development programs for students
- Greater role for training officers to work with career advisors in schools.

ⁱ The Cost of VET in Schools, June 2003, Final Report to Department of Education, Science and Training, Barnett, K. and Ryan, R., NCVER: Lesson and Challenges: Vocational education in schools – Research overview, 2005.

ⁱⁱ Transcript of Evidence, 2 September 2003, The Cost of VET in Schools Report.

ⁱⁱⁱ National Career Development Strategy Green Paper, June 2012, p 1.

^{iv} Ibid, p 2.