

**Speech to International Forum on Education in Correctional
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**Overview of VET sector
11.45am Monday 26th**

Today I intend to speak on three main areas:

- I will begin by providing a brief overview of some changes which will effect our environment

- I will then talk about some of the things that ANTA and the VET sector are doing to address these changes and what the future means for VET and for learning

- Then I will conclude by talking briefly about VET in Correctional Institutions.

The Future

One thing we can be sure of is that the future will be different from the past. We will have:

- Enterprises committed to skill development

- Individuals motivated and able to learn for life and work

- Communities built on knowledge and ideas

The environment in which we live is also changing:

- Once we lived for 70 years, now its likely to be 100
- Things were mass produced, now they are individualised
- Skills and knowledge were acquired, now we have knowledge creation and navigation
- IQ was how we measured intelligence, now we have broader notions of capability
- We prepared for jobs, now we prepare for the unfamiliar and people are likely to have several different careers in a lifetime

Learning Communities will play a major part in our futures:

- A Learning community is a multi-dimensional, non linear concept
 - it can exist in physical or virtual space
 - It can be geographical in nature or a community of common culture, interest or purpose.
- In the future it may be less defined by where we live than by what we believe in 'communities of values'
- What is common to all is the ability to mobilise physical, economic, social and intellectual resources to advance personal fulfilment, social development and create economic prosperity and resilience through lifelong learning for all.

There are five elements of successful learning communities worth noting:

- Community involvement in decision making mechanisms
- Dispersed leadership and active partnerships
- Social capital stockpiling
- Culture of innovation
- Futures orientation

So what does it all mean?

- to the individual learner, the organisation and the VET sector?

Currently there are:

- 1,650,000 VET students
- 680,000 university students
- 420,000 senior secondary school students

So you can see from the numbers alone, just how important VET is in the overall scheme of things and why it is important that the VET sector adjust to the changing environment.

The changing environment has implications for both organisations and individuals:

- Organisations need to be 'high performing' – flexible, creative, innovative and competitive
- Individuals and the workforce need to become 'highly skilled' using technology, operating globally and developing collaborative partnerships

What does this mean for the individual learner?

- Training can take place at a college or in workplace
- Assessment is based on practical demonstration of skill (and knowledge and experience)
- Qualifications will be nationally recognised.

All providing the learner with a more flexible environment and providing a diverse range of opportunities/pathways which can lead on to life long learning.

Though lifelong learning – a person can return to undertake higher level certificates as it suits.

In the changing environment, life long learning becomes equally essential for individuals, for enterprises, for communities and the nation

The ability to learn and apply knowledge will be a major skill in the future and the elements of successful learning communities will be important.

The next national strategy for VET will need to take these broad themes of social, economic and cultural values into account as well as addressing the needs of organisations and individuals.

For individuals and organisations to keep up with the changing environment, learning becomes more important than ever.

What is ANTA doing to address these challenges?

We need a national VET system, which will be acknowledged world wide as a key contributor to Australian's economic growth and social well-being, that has the following features:

- Delivers the skills base industry needs
- Is truly responsive
- A system which understands and values the differences in the way people learn

In order to meet the challenges of the future, ANTA is continually working towards building better partnerships with our stakeholders, understanding our clients better and thinking strategically in order to be 'ahead of the game'.

ANTA and the VET sector has established a framework, the national training framework, to better address the future needs of the country.

- **The NTF is central to the VET reforms**

It provides:

- A more coherent and integrated nationally consistent approach to VET
- Improved quality of all VET products and services
- National recognition and portability
- Increased flexibility in delivery
- Greater responsiveness to client needs

The national training framework, while profound in its effect and consequences, is based on some very simple propositions:

1. industry describes the competencies it wants in the workplace
2. the competencies are mapped to a simple set of qualifications that are recognised nationally, and we're on the way to having them recognised internationally
3. there is now a whole range of people who provide training – TAFEs and private providers who are registered to ensure they can deliver a quality

product. This recognition system is now national. We are forging ahead with what we call flexible delivery – in other words, training that is

- just in time
- just enough
- just for you.

Flexible delivery in these terms means that training can be structured in an enormous variety of ways –

- on–the-job, off-the-job or anything in between
- provided any time of the day or night, over 365 days of the year
- on-line and off-line
- self paced or classroom.

VET is now available to a far wider range of industries and occupations than ever before and a wider range of individuals – and many more of them now participate in the formal VET system, achieving portable nationally recognised qualifications.

This flexibility should provide assistance to prison systems, educators and to prisoners

The central features of the NTF are:

- New recognition arrangements – the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). Ministers renamed the Australian Recognition Framework, the AQTF in June 2001, and
- Training packages

Firstly the AQTF, this provide:

- Streamlined regulation to support nationally agreed reforms and initiatives
- Improved quality assurance
- National consistency of systems and operations
- Mutual recognition across States and Territories of registered training organisations (RTOs), service and products
- Registration of all training organisations seeking recognition

Ministers adoption of the AQTF and the national implementation of its standards and requirements represents a major achievement in assuring and further raising the quality of VET delivery and assessment in Australia.

Now to Training Packages

Recognised and structured training has moved from fixed term long cycle courses to Training Packages and is more flexible than ever before.

Training packages providing comprehensive industry standards (including key competencies) and national qualifications will be available across all industry sectors and widely used for delivery and assessment.

Training Packages have the following characteristics:

- Assessment against units of competency – not curriculum learning outcomes
- Designed for flexible delivery
- Responsive to the needs of industry
- User friendly for both individuals and enterprises
- Genuinely national and portable
- integrate national products to provide comprehensive national resources for VET
- have components which identify benchmarks for provision and national recognition, and
- non-endorsed components provide tools to guide and assist provision

The AQTF and Training Packages, are the cornerstones of the National Training Framework.

Together they will ensure that::

- People can develop the skills needed by enterprises and industries using VET products and services
- Training providers are free to respond to changing skill needs of firms, industries and individuals
- Training programs help people develop key competencies, so making them more adaptable to industry needs
- Vocational education and training products and services are developed for all industries
- Qualifications are easily understood by employers and employees and they represent an accurate picture of a person's skills.

Important features for those people in correctional facilities undertaking VET, I would think.

So what are the Benefits of working with the NTF?

The NTF is designed to provide benefits to employers, students and providers.

These benefits include portability of credentials which means that:

- training outcomes are recognised in every S/T

- there is the capacity to continue training when a student moves between institutes or states.

Nationally recognised language, literacy and numeracy competencies are being incorporated into training packages. These can be stand-alone and will provide a common language for teachers when describing individuals' progress and needs.

As a result of the reforms, registered training organisations will be able to operate in all States and Territories, developing a borderless vocational education and training system. Qualifications and statements of attainment issued by one registered training organisation will be recognised by others and there will be rigorous quality assurance and auditing arrangements in place.

In addition to improving the system, ANTA is working on a number of initiatives. One of these is the marketing and communications strategy.

We know that ANTA and the VET sector and systems are perceived to be far too complex and bureaucratic.

ANTA used social marketing techniques to assess Australian's attitude to life long learning and skill acquisition and then to try to grab the hearts and minds of all Australians, including industry.

What we know from this research is that Lifelong Learning is as essential as breathing

- Knowledge society has the potential to alienate those not empowered to engage in the new economy
- The challenge is not to create communities of 'have's' and 'have nots' but to take everyone along the lifelong learning journey
- Lifelong learning is not an option, it is essential to the ongoing prosperity of individuals, enterprises, communities and the nation
- Build a society based on a passion to learn throughout life

Key Points from ANTA's market research into skills and lifelong learning:

- The overwhelming majority of Australians value learning
- Informal learning is more highly valued than formal learning
- 1 in 3 cite fear of technology as a barrier to learning
- 15% of the community cite lack of time as a barrier to learning
- 20% say they would undertake learning if they have more time.

We started with:

- Market research and
- Market segmentation

The marketing strategy is helping us understand our client groups better so that we can:

- Tailor our products
- Develop appropriate communications campaigns and
- Reengineer our business around our customer needs.

The market research and subsequent analysis identified eight segments in the general community – each with different individual learning attitudes, learning habits, demographics and media/leisure preferences.

I will briefly outline these now:

- Passionate learners (21% of the community) - People who value learning per se and are highly likely to learn in the future
- Almost there (6%) – those who value learning per se but see barriers to learning, nevertheless showing high intention of learning in the future
- Learn to earn (17%) – people who only value learning related to jobs and qualifications and are highly likely to learn in the future
- Might give it away (7%) – the segment that places little value on learning (second only to forget it) but shows high intention to learn in the future
- Make it easier (16%) – those who value learning per se but see barriers to learning and are less likely to learn in the future

- Learning on hold (11%) – people who value learning per se but are less likely to learn in the future
- Done with it (14%) – people who only value learning related to jobs and qualifications are less likely to learn in the future
- Forget it (8%) – the segment that least values learning and is less likely to learn in the future

A few statistics are worth noting here:

- Of Australians aged 15 to 64, 18% were participating in education and training in 2000
- Of Australians aged 25 to 64, 8% were participating in education and training in 2000
- 40% of the Australian workforce aged 15 to 64 did not have a post-school qualification in 2000. Some of these workers were participating in tertiary level education and training or were still at school
- In total, 15% of the Australian workforce aged 15 to 64 were participating in education and training in 2000 (ABS 2000)

We have some way to go until we are a nation valuing life long learning.

We also know that:

- on average, those individuals without post-school qualifications,
 - have higher levels of unemployment,
 - lower levels of labour-force mobility,
 - a higher chance of being retrenched
 - lower earnings, and
 - undertake less training than do people with qualifications.

We also know that generally prisoners have a lower level of education than the average Australian with a small proportion having completed high school and so are likely to fit into the above groups both before and after prison.

Lifelong learning is about breaking down barriers and replacing them with building blocks. Creating building blocks is not about lowering the standard of our education, but about creating viable steps towards realising various qualifications and levels of attainment, which can be built on in a number of ways. It is also about ensuring that lots of different coloured, shaped and sized blocks fit together.

We need to work out how we can meet this challenge in correctional facilities.

Research on VET programs in the Australian prison system has tended to be qualitative rather than quantitative.

A theme reflected in some small studies in Australia is that VET programs do improve access to employment, and lower recidivism, but few studies identify how

VET assists as there are many variables which affect why prisoners participate in programs, how they respond, the style of training and the support networks available.

Currently training in correctional institutions is mainly the responsibility of Correctional Services departments rather than the State Training Authorities. However, any VET undertaken in prisons should be consistent with the AQTF so that prisoners will have a transferable record of their learning outcomes.

VET provides an opportunity for prisoners to undertake real courses and to gain a qualification while at the same time improving literacy and numeracy skills.

Prisoners can often fit into equity groups as many have poor literacy and numeracy skills, there is a high proportion of Indigenous inmates and others may have a disability of some sort. Generally I would think that prisoners would fit into the same market segments as equity groups generally.

As the prison population has grown in recent years, it is increasingly important for VET to be integrated into prison life.

Prisoners need to know that education will be an essential part of their time in prison, as will work, eating and recreation. They also need to be reminded that learning can be a positive experience, which builds upon one's life identity and

history. Prison officers also need to be aware of, and acknowledge the various ways in which education can occur

Prisons are able to take advantage of flexible modes of delivery and the pathways offered by the AQTF so they can integrate VET, personal development and tertiary educational programs. These flexible modes may assist in overcoming, what is often quoted as a problem, the lack of teaching staff/tutors and a lack of understanding of adult learning methods. Other problems cited are lack of supplies, equipment and learning resources. The NTF, through Training Packages and the AQTF, also provides some answers to these issues.

There is a need for an integrated approach from educators and prison management if programs are to be successful. The reforms introduced to the VET sector should assist prison systems to provide an integrated approach to prisoner learning. As well, it can be crucial to giving inmates skills to leave a life of crime behind them when they leave prison. It provides the ability to continue studying anywhere in the country.

VET is essentially about the learning and developing of knowledge and skills, which enable a person to make something better of one's life, not only for work. And for those in prison, education including VET is a most important means for enabling prisoners to develop a more positive and powerful sense of themselves, their abilities and their role in society. Prison can, and needs to, be an educational

experience for each prisoner and it needs to take into account the distinctive ways in which people see themselves as learning and being educated.

As well as training in institutions, it is important to focus effort on post-release training.

Studies on male and female post-release experience suggest that, despite their best intentions, post release responsibilities and weak social networks make it very difficult for most prisoners to contemplate further study or training.

Education and training has the potential to decrease recidivism and prisoner tension by:

- Increasing prisoner self-esteem
- Providing successful re-entry to the community
- Providing viable options for work as opposed to criminal activity
- Enhancing prisoner thinking and moral reasoning
- Occupying prisoners time and allowing individual expression

The draft National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training for Adult Prisoners and Offenders in Australia addresses these issues.

ANTA, after discussions with representatives of Correctional Services Educators, at the last conference actually, formed a reference group comprising

representatives from the Commonwealth and the States and Territories (both VET and Corrections), some of whom are here today. The project to complete the strategy commenced in the latter half of 2000.

The draft strategy, like others such as those for people with a disability and Indigenous Australians, is linked to the National Vocational Education and Training Strategy.

The rationale for the strategy was for a national strategy for vocational education and training for adult prisoners and offenders in Australia which clearly articulates objectives, takes account of recent changes and priorities in the VET sector and can be agreed by both the VET and correctional services sectors.

The strategy has a vision:

To provide adult prisoners and offenders with educational and vocational pathways which will support their productive contribution to the economic and social life of the community.

The objectives are:

- To improve access to vocational education and training for adult prisoners and offenders

- To support successful participation and attainment across a range of fields of study and levels of vocational education and training
 - To contribute to the employment and learning pathways which can support the successful reintegration of offenders in the community
 - To create an accountable system that provides equitable vocational education and training outcomes for offenders.
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- **To conclude:**

Today I have provided a brief overview of the national strategy, which establishes a framework for vocational education and training reforms and the Australian Quality Training Framework including Training Packages. I have talked about some specific initiatives such as the communications strategy before outlining some issues relating to training in correctional institutions

Hopefully you will want to know more and so I will leave you with the ANTA website address. The website contains a wide range of information about vocational education and training. You are able to read about what is happening at a national level and search for information on specific areas of interest. In addition, it has links to other sites.

<http://www.anta.gov.au>