

Making the connections

48 ways to progress equity in the national vocational education and training system

Suzy McKenna



2004

Australian
Indigenous
Training
Advisory
Council

Australian Disability
Training Advisory Council



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Making the connections: 48 ways to progress equity in the national vocational education and training system

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Introduction

This publication provides insights into how vocational education and training (VET) practitioners and organisations are responding to a key challenge in implementing a national vocational education and training system in Australia – improving opportunities for equity groups, such as people with a disability and Indigenous people, to not only access but also to achieve successful outcomes from vocational education and training.

Reframing the Future is the national staff development and change management program funded through the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) to assist with the implementation of the national training system. Since 1997, over 38,300 VET practitioners have participated in Reframing the Future projects.

In this 2003 equity initiative, fifty-four Reframing the Future projects, with more than 1300 participants, addressed the staff development needs of VET staff involved with equity groups. The equity projects benefited from special funding provided by the Australian Government through the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and approved by the Australian Disability Training Advisory Council (ADTAC) and the Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council (AITAC), and in particular by their Professional Development Sub-committees. Representatives from ADTAC and AITAC participated in the selection of the projects. This special funding enabled Reframing the Future to conduct up to ten projects focusing on Indigenous strategies and up to forty-seven projects focusing on the Disability strategy.

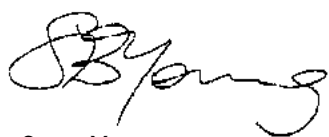
The publication contains profiles of the work of forty-eight projects that reached completion. Profiles from the remaining six projects were not available at the time of publication. Eight of the profiles describe professional development strategies for staff delivering VET that follow the Blueprint for implementation of *Partners in a Learning Culture – Australia's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for VET*. The other forty profiles provide insights into how projects equipped training delivery and other staff with skills to assist in the inclusion of people with a disability, in response to the staff development strategy from the *Blueprint for implementation of Bridging Pathways – the ANTA National strategy for increasing opportunities for people with a disability in VET*.

All of these profiles are relevant to VET personnel wishing to support *Shaping our Future, Australia's national vocational education and training strategy 2004–2010*.

The profiles are based on selected projects' action plans, mid-term and final reports; notes taken at review workshops and forums; site visits by Reframing the Future personnel; and from other direct contact by email or telephone between Reframing the Future staff and project teams.

Suzy McKenna, the Reframing the Future Senior Project Officer who managed the equity program, wrote this publication, with support from John Mitchell of John Mitchell and Associates, consultant to Reframing the Future.

We invite you to compare your experiences with the forty-eight stories set out here. More insights and information are available at <http://reframingthefuture.net> or by contacting us on 08 8207 9688.



Susan Young
National Project Director
Reframing the Future

March 2004

Policy Framework for Bridging Pathways and Partners in a Learning Culture Blueprints

In 2000 Ministers made a significant commitment to improving opportunities for people with a disability and Indigenous Australians through the *Bridging Pathways and Partners in a Learning Culture*, National Strategies and Blueprints for Implementation. These documents, which run until 2005, assign specific responsibilities to a range of VET sector and other partner organisations to improve vocational education and training outcomes for people with a disability and Indigenous Australians.

Two national councils, the Australian Disability Training Advisory Council (ADTAC) and the Australian Indigenous Training Advisory Council (AITAC) continue to monitor progress. Both councils have broad membership drawn from industry, interest groups, government (including representatives from each State and Territory Training Authority and the Australian Government), ANTA and providers.

In 2002/03 the Councils undertook a comprehensive review of the Blueprint progress and identified a number of critical areas for priority action in the next two years, including the need to:

- Continue capacity building within the VET sector with a focus on building the understanding and skills of VET sector staff to actively support people with a disability and Indigenous Australians achieve successful outcomes and pathways to employment;
- Ensure the development and delivery of core products, e.g. Training Packages, are responsive to client needs and do not act as a barrier to engagement, and that every aspect of product design and delivery are inclusive and culturally appropriate;
- Improve employment outcomes;
- Do more in making available effective training pathways through practical access to nationally recognised training opportunities, and active fostering of pathways between lower and higher level qualifications; and
- Build on the good will and collaboration that has characterised the first half of the Blueprints, and to increase strategic alliances that will help deliver desired outcomes.

A number of projects profiled in this publication were undertaken to address important issues such as these.

Shaping Our Future – Australia’s National Strategy for VET: 2004–2010 was agreed by Ministers in November 2003. The National Strategy highlights the importance of diversity in growing a more skilled workforce, generating greater creativity and innovation and ultimately boosting the economy and supporting a more cohesive society. For vocational education and training (VET), it points to the need for the system to value and support diversity and to design products and services to suit all learners. This is reflected in Objective 2 of the Strategy. Objective 4 of the Strategy will focus on helping Indigenous people and communities increase employment and business development opportunities and provide a foundation for greater economic independence through vocational education and training.

Links to ANTA publications

Shaping Our Future – Australia’s National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training (VET): 2004–2010	http://www.anta.gov.au/publication.asp?qsID=488
Partners in a Learning Culture National Strategy	http://www.anta.gov.au/publication.asp?qsID=61
Partners in a Learning Culture Blueprint for Implementation	http://www.anta.gov.au/publication.asp?qsID=62
Bridging Pathways National Strategy	http://www.anta.gov.au/publication.asp?qsID=74
Bridging Pathways Blueprint for Implementation	http://www.anta.gov.au/publication.asp?qsID=57

Definitions and further information about terms used in this publication

The following definitions of terms regularly used in this document are provided at www.anta.gov.au the website of the Australian National Training Authority.

The **National Training Framework (NTF)** is the system of vocational education and training that applies nationally. It is made up of the Australian Quality Training Framework and nationally accredited Training Packages.

The **Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)** is a set of nationally agreed arrangements to ensure the quality of vocational education and training services throughout Australia.

A **Training Package** is an integrated set of nationally endorsed standards, guidelines and qualifications for training, assessing and recognising people's skills, developed by industry to meet the training needs of an industry or group of industries. Training packages consist of core endorsed components of competency standards, assessment guidelines and qualifications and optional non-endorsed components of support materials such as learning strategies, assessment resources and professional development materials.

A **Registered Training Organisation (RTO)** is an organisation registered by a state or territory recognition authority to deliver training and/or conduct assessments and issue nationally recognised qualifications in accordance with the Australian Quality Training Framework. Registered Training Organisations include TAFE colleges and institutes, adult and community education providers, private providers, community organisations, schools, higher education institutions, commercial and enterprise training providers, industry bodies and other organisations meeting the registration requirements.

An **industry training advisory body (ITAB)** also called **industry training advisory board, industry training council, or industry advisory body** is an organisation, usually an incorporated association or company, recognised as representing a particular industry and providing advice to government on the vocational education and training needs of its particular industry. There are both national and state industry training advisory bodies. In 2003–2004, national ITABs were superseded by **industry skills councils**.

In vocational education and training, **equity** policy incorporates measures to improve access to, participation in, and outcomes of vocational education and training for those who may be disadvantaged or have traditionally been under-represented, especially Indigenous Australians, people with a disability, women, people in remote and rural communities, and people from a non-English-speaking background.

For more information about the above concepts and for definitions of other training and assessment terms found in this publication, see the ANTA glossary at www.anta.gov.au or refer to *Training Packages @ Work – Back 2 Basics: an introduction to Australia's national training system for teachers and trainers* at www.tpatwork.com

For brevity, the following abbreviations are used throughout this report:

ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
AQTF	Australian Quality Training Framework
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training

What to look for in this publication

The forty-eight project profiles in this publication are set out under three of the five Reframing the Future Sub-program areas: Staff Development; Networking and Communities of Practice (including Communities of Practice, Industry Training Networks and Assessor Networks); and Applying Information and Research.

When reading the profiles, we invite you to look for the following insights into how VET practitioners are assisting equity groups while implementing the national training system:

- The **many stakeholders** who are collaborating to identify the challenges and to arrive at solutions to provide improved access to training and support for equity groups.
- The **different contexts** in which the national training system is implemented, ranging from the provision of accredited training for youth with disabilities in metropolitan Australia to introducing recognition processes to Indigenous sports development officers in regional areas of Western Australia.
- The **diverse group of providers** in the national arena who are responding to the needs of equity groups, including Indigenous community RTOs, TAFE institutes, government departments, private colleges, Adult and Community Education organisations and Group Training companies, as well as enterprise providers such as Brite Industries, Cumberland Industries and Barkuma Inc.
- The **varied challenges** presented by the national training system – from implementing delivery and assessment strategies to meet the individual needs of a diverse range of clients in a wide range of Training Package qualifications to improving the knowledge and ability of equity support staff to engage more effectively with the system.
- The **opportunities** within the national training system that enable providers to introduce flexibility and innovation into delivery and assessment processes and to engage industry and the community in the process.
- The **commitment of providers** involved with equity groups to meet the requirements of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF), particularly for quality and consistency of assessment through ‘reasonable adjustment’ strategies and the provision of timely and clear information about their services to specific client populations.
- The **creative use of local networks** to circulate current information to disability and Indigenous organisations and other education sectors, about the opportunities available for their clients in the national training system.
- The **sophisticated roles** played by project coordinators and facilitators, who often modelled advanced skills in project management and change management as well as in the use of workbased learning strategies.
- The involvement of **providers’ management staff** in formulating policies and procedures to support the inclusion of equity groups.
- The enthusiasm and commitment of **state industry and skills networks** for increasing employment outcomes and training opportunities for equity groups. The contributors include Manufacturing Learning Victoria; Communications and Information Technology Training Ltd; and the Business Training Advisory Board (ACT) Inc.

The **support of government departments and policy makers**, either as project sponsors, participants or promoters.

Key Messages

This publication reveals multiple responses by the VET sector to the many challenges of progressing equity in the national training system through professional development. Set out below are some key messages from the publication.

Registered Training Organisations are increasing their capabilities of meeting the needs of a diverse range of clients

The profiles in this document show that there is a new understanding of the difficulties for specific cohorts of learners among Indigenous clients and those with a specific disability. As proof of this new understanding Registered Training Organisations are:

- refining the ability to provide clear and concise information to guide clients in making choices based on an understanding of industry skill requirements
- demonstrating the ability to form partnerships with disability support agencies, Indigenous community groups and Indigenous RTOs
- actively encouraging VET practitioners to contribute their professional expertise and perspectives to these partnerships.

Individual VET practitioners' capabilities are increasing through collaboration

The profiles in this publication show that unexpected benefits can emerge from collaboration between stakeholders, particularly between VET and equity support organisations or specialists, and especially at the local level. Various groups have their own favourite expressions, jargon and understandings, and projects help to break down these barriers. For example, 'assessment' and 'disability' mean different things for different stakeholder groups. Unintended benefits often flow from professional conversations between stakeholders.

A main benefit of collaboration is that it helps increase practitioners' capabilities. For instance, there is evidence in the profiles of:

- the development of innovative approaches to teaching, learning and assessment strategies – and to administration – to meet the needs of equity groups
- an interest in collaboratively exploring, with specialists, the challenge of meeting the needs of all learners by using inclusive practices and 'universal' design
- a move from a previous focus on delivery and support for groups with special needs to a new focus on assessment leading to employment outcomes.

Much is still to be done, but practitioners are developing an enhanced understanding of each other's language and systems.

There is strong interest in improving assessment strategies

Among the major findings from these forty-eight Reframing the Future equity projects is the high level of interest among RTOs in improving assessment strategies for equity groups, in line with AQTF Standards 8 and 9. Practitioners are focusing their interest and efforts on:

- 'reasonable adjustment'
- assessment validation and moderation
- recognition of current competencies, and
- developing assessor networks and assessment tools.

Disability challenges are surmountable

In the profiles, sometimes the issues posed by disabilities in relation to providing training seemed insurmountable: for example, how to meet the needs of prisoners with intellectual disabilities. However, developing a sound grasp of the national training system and accessing disability support systems led many participants to invent innovative client-focused solutions.

Indigenous people can guide RTOs

In those projects where strong partnerships were formed between Indigenous people and RTOs, the flow of information was two-way. RTOs conveyed technical information and Indigenous participants explained the different perspectives they bring to training. For instance, one project focused on knowledge management strategies which led to an awareness about how difficult it is to move from a Western-based approach where individuals manage and hold information, to an Indigenous-style where practice is informed by collective wisdom.

Often the key to successful projects was in VET practitioners carefully listening to Indigenous participants and then trying different solutions.

Making links adds value

Several of the profiles provide evidence of linkages to other professional development initiatives or national and state strategies that add value to all parties. For example:

- One project that brought together industry, RTOs and disability agencies will now contribute to informing how equity is represented in a Training Package review.
- Another intends to embed equity considerations in the development of online resources.
- Several projects will maintain direct links to state 'Bridging Pathways' and 'Partners in a Learning Culture' committees so that their learning feeds back into state and local initiatives.

Having time and space to learn and reflect is refreshing

There is abundant evidence in the profiles of the ability to look outside one's immediate environment and day-to-day work pressures to reflect on and practice new ways of knowing and doing in the VET system. A sense of renewed vigour and enthusiasm for moving forward into new domains is featured in many profiles.

Complexity can be managed

Implementing the national training system and enhancing access for equity groups are both complex undertakings, requiring the skill and energy of VET organisations, practitioners and clients working alongside their colleagues in equity organisations.

We encourage you to look through the forty-eight stories to see that skill and energy on display.

Ways the benefits will be sustained

Many of the RTOs, organisations and practitioners who were involved in the 2003 Reframing the Future equity professional development projects intend to continue implementing or building on project activities and outcomes during 2004. They will use the following strategies:

- ***Building on collaboration and cooperation***

Once an alliance has been established in one area, opportunities for exploring various other activities or interests are opened up. Many projects in 2003 built on, widened or strengthened existing networks, others found new ways to work together and some brought together stakeholders for the first time.

- ***Using a catalytic or cascading effect***

Many of the profiles suggest that once a new understanding or practice is created it can be carried throughout a cohort of practitioners or across an organisation by drawing on the experience of the participants in the 2003 projects. This strategy was foreshadowed and used deliberately by some organisations from their outset. In other cases it has emerged as an unintended but nevertheless highly valued outcome as the project progressed.

Strategies highlighted in the profiles include sharing with peers the successes due to inclusive practice and then including the concept of inclusive practice, with local examples, in new teacher induction programs in 2004.

- ***Continuing to experiment and reflect***

By participating in a workbased learning process that enables experimentation and reflection many participants were able to gain confidence, often in small ways. For example practitioners found they could ameliorate the potential for problems to 'take over' in a mainstream setting by:

- using inclusive approaches
- demonstrating cultural sensitivity, and/or
- making minor adjustments to teaching and assessment processes.

Having experienced success, practitioners are more likely to continue to use experimentation and reflection more deeply and widely.

- ***Maintaining project tasks and workbased learning approaches***

Many profiles show how the participants intend to continue their endeavours or re-engage in 2004 with work that has emerged from their 2003 project. Others have investigated ways to ensure that workbased learning about equity will continue to be supported and broadened within their organisations. Yet others have formed informal networks or mentoring relationships so they can continue to share their passion, expertise, learning, issues and solutions.

Readers could also apply these beneficial strategies. We encourage you to look through the forty-eight profiles for more details.

Adopting, adapting or applying strategies or products

Organisations, RTOs and practitioners who were not involved in a Reframing the Future 2003 equity professional development project are encouraged to use the project profiles to look for ways to apply the insights, ideas, strategies, or processes in their own setting. For instance you may:

- ***Use or adapt the project products and resources***

Many projects used the development of a product or resource as the vehicle for workbased learning. Several of these products have been mentioned in the profiles and may be useful more widely and often in other contexts. They include:

- assessment tools
- information brochures
- assessment and delivery strategies
- guidelines
- protocols for cooperative arrangements
- case studies
- information that can be accessed through an intranet or the Internet.

Project products may be accessed by contacting the specific project coordinator through the Reframing the Future website.

- ***Adopt or modify workbased learning processes or project action plans***

The workbased learning process and activities utilised by a project have been highlighted in each profile as have the benefits and challenges that were encountered. An action plan describing the intended activities of each project can be found on the Reframing the Future website.

- ***Follow up on details with a project coordinator or facilitator***

Find a project coordinator's or facilitator's contact details in the project action plan on the Reframing the Future website.

- ***Use Reframing the Future publications***

The Reframing the Future website is a portal to many publications and resources that provide good ideas about professional development in the VET system. All Reframing the Future publications can be ordered through the website. They are delivered free and several can be downloaded as a PDF.

<http://reframingthefuture.net>

The profiles

Sub-program I

Staff Development

This sub-program of Reframing the Future involves workbased learning projects focusing on continuous improvement within the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) and on the implementation of recently endorsed Training Packages.

In 2003, 5 Indigenous-focused projects were conducted involving 94 participants and more than 10 organisations. Three organisations were first-time sponsors of a Reframing the Future project.

Twenty-five disability-focused projects were conducted involving around 650 participants and over 50 organisations. Three organisations were first-time sponsors of a Reframing the Future project.

Highlights

Some highlights from the Staff Development projects include:

- a deeper awareness of the value of workbased learning as a methodology for gaining collaboration and trust between disparate parties not used to working together
- the development of new knowledge about Training Packages, AQTF compliance and quality issues and assessment processes, particularly when RTOs are confronted with contexts not encountered previously
- a special focus by many projects on one or more of the following topics: reasonable adjustment; improving access to information; staff development for sessional staff; customising learning and assessment to suit people with specific disabilities; and building capacity through networking.

Abmusic Aboriginal Corporation

Indigenous RTO uses action research to listen to learners and refresh teaching strategies

Abmusic, based at Waterford in Western Australia, provides Certificates I to IV in Music. Its Reframing the Future project contributed to an overall increase of 20% in retention rates during 2003 as well as a trend for students to progress to more advanced certificates.

Throughout the action research project the teaching and support staff developed skills in creating practical strategies to resolve ongoing and everyday issues. The staff discovered that what impacted most on successful completion was sporadic attendance. Other class members, as well as learners who missed classes, were affected because some people always took class time to 'catch up'. The staff team decided to establish a 'Catch up Class' and continuously evaluate its effectiveness. Student feedback indicated that 'shame' was associated with going to a session called catch up class so the name was changed to 'Tutorial Support'. The sessions were then opened up to any students wanting some extra assistance or practice.

The action research process of developing, trialing, reviewing, modifying and evaluating worked well. Refinements were suggested in weekly staff meetings and these included the development of a referral sheet with assessments attached; extension work suggestions provided to the tutor by the teacher; and using the class for practice opportunities in basic skills. One student commented 'That class helped me stick with the program.'

The project has also enabled the staff team to develop an overall student management plan so that both the class teacher and the tutor can communicate about the program of work for an individual student. In 2004, as a result of the activities of this Reframing the Future project, Abmusic plans to introduce a two-week orientation and student evaluation period for each new intake. Students' learning gaps will be identified upfront and they can then be grouped appropriately into ensemble groups. This process will also take into account their family connections.

University of Ballarat TAFE Division

Culturally appropriate assessment guidelines and tools developed

In this Reframing the Future project the Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff from the University of Ballarat and some Koorie child care centres in Victoria collaborated to develop culturally appropriate assessment tools for units in the Diploma of Children's Services. The workbased learning process used by the team of trialing and using a holistic assessment tool primarily in the workplace proved to be very effective.

The project began with a 'Cross Cultural Awareness' session that helped the group to see learning and assessment from a Koorie perspective. With input from a Koorie child care worker, the participants realised that some assessments could

be done as group work, which is a preferred method of learning in Koorie culture. They also looked at the reasons why learners may not be keeping up with work or might not turn up at assessment time. As a result, one of the trainers tried using oral assessments in the workplace with her Koorie students rather than written assignments. She was convinced that the Training Package criteria could be fully met with this form of assessment.

A key concept discovered by the participants was that assessment is a continuous circular process between the learner and the assessor which involves gathering evidence, providing feedback, then allowing for reflection, action, review and further assessment.

Such concepts and experience formed the basis of draft guidelines for assessing Indigenous students. 'Through the project,' said co-convenor Jenni White, 'it became apparent that the whole assessment process is fraught with cultural assumptions. We tried to reflect this revelation in our draft guidelines'. The guidelines may be useful throughout the University of Ballarat TAFE division.

An unintended but valuable outcome of the project was the discovery that, because people from industry were involved, the group was actually undertaking an assessment validation activity and finding evidence for meeting AQTF Standards 9.1 and 9.2.

The Royal Life Saving Society Australia (WA Branch)

Network develops a model for ongoing support of Indigenous trainees

A model to provide an appropriate student support service for Indigenous trainees in the Certificate II in Community Recreation was the focus of activity during this Reframing the Future project.

To develop the service and to increase their knowledge of the national training system and of the sport and recreation industry and Community Recreation qualifications, a network was formed of trainees, Group Training Companies, trainers, host employers and Indigenous community members. Most importantly, however, they worked together to develop a better understanding of Indigenous trainees' needs. They also identified clear lines of responsibility for providing on-time identification of support requirements as well as the provision of appropriate support and information about the VET system.

Project coordinator, Ian Brown, from The Royal Life Saving Society Australia (WA branch) believes that the student support services model they created with Indigenous trainees would be appropriate for all trainees.

In the complex traineeship environment, where the many players have varying but overlapping responsibilities, project participants forged strong relationships and networks that may also open more doors for Indigenous workers in community recreation. Employers in the industry include football clubs and recreation and aquatic centres. An Aboriginal community elder who participated said, 'Before the project I never really considered Aboriginal employment in the sport and recreation industry as a viable option. I now know better.'

The knowledge acquired surprised the participants, with one of the non-Indigenous trainers commenting, 'I thought that I had a really good understanding of Indigenous issues. This project has helped me to increase my knowledge and to develop valuable links with others.'

East Gippsland Aboriginal Community Development and Employment Program

Mentoring increases the confidence of staff at an Indigenous training organisation

When faced with the challenge of establishing East Gippsland Aboriginal Community Development and Employment Program Inc. (EGACDEP) as a Registered Training Organisation, Lesley Bennett, the project coordinator, set up a partnership with Bairnsdale Adult and Community Education Centre (BACE), a local community-based RTO. A mentoring arrangement for Indigenous trainers and administration staff was organised with the established RTO. Administration staff at EGACDEP needed to find out about and work within the Australian Quality Training Framework Standards while the training staff were eager to increase their skills and knowledge and, most importantly, their confidence so they could be effective trainers.

At the end of the Reframing the Future project Lesley reflected:

Our staff are now able to present themselves with increasing levels of confidence in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community and talk about education and training and its relationship to 'self determination'. All staff have developed a professional outlook and attitude to their individual responsibilities and the vision of the organisation as a whole.

The mentoring arrangements enabled flexible learning opportunities in which Indigenous trainers could be supported to follow their individual learning pathway and incorporate specific learning opportunities as they arose. The mentees had the opportunity to work-shadow experienced VET staff and to ask a multitude of questions as issues arose. They also accompanied their BACE mentors to meetings, workshops and conferences, which enabled them to develop useful professional networks with non-Indigenous organisations and individuals.

Mentoring and on-the-spot support also proved to be successful strategies for overcoming poor educational experiences in the past and resolving cultural differences in communication.

Ngaanyatjarra Health Aboriginal Corporation

Remote Indigenous RTO prefers Standards in a picture language

The 'Sticky Honey' project set out to improve participant knowledge and skills in delivering and assessing Health Training Package units in remote Aboriginal communities where English is very much a second or even third language. Project participants were also interested in exploring how AQTF Standards 6, 8 and 9 could be shown to be met in this cultural context.

Discussion centred on the delivery of two units of work about sexually transmitted diseases called 'Sex, Yum, Ouch!' and 'Sex, Yum, Arrgh!'. These units of work are visually driven multimedia multi-lingual interactive CDs in English, Pitjantjatjara and potentially Ngaanyatjarra, developed with LearnScope funding. Although the CDs were originally constructed to deliver information, the participants in the 'Sticky Honey' Reframing the Future project became interested in their potential as assessment tools. It was found that a series of questions and pictures at the end of each unit could readily assess the information and attitudes learnt.

Trials of the CDs with Ngaanyatjarra-speaking health workers and community representatives at Warburton WA revealed, however, that individual assessment and evaluation in a cross-cultural work environment could be problematic because translation, interpretation, learning and assessment are essentially group activities in this community. While learning is acceptable in a 'multi-literacy' group-learning format, the question arose as to whether individual competency-based assessments could be shown to be valid and reliable if undertaken in a similar way. How flexible can 'flexible assessment strategies' be? What are the limits of 'culturally appropriate' in competency-based assessments?

In coming to grips with the AQTF Standards, the participants quickly realised that the Standards themselves relied on very sophisticated English and written language skills to get their message across. The participants found the language of these standards to be foreign to remote community Indigenous trainers – many of whom have multiple jobs and roles in the community. Participants decided the Standards should be translated, not just into Indigenous languages, but also into a unifying 'picture' language so that all the users can understand them together and work within them.

It seemed to the facilitator, Christopher Brocklebank of Big Fat Productions, that during the Reframing the Future project more questions were asked than answered – but in identifying the questions the participants moved beyond a focus on information about training and assessment and engaged deeply with other key aspects of the national training system.

Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE

The Reasonable Adjustment Action Group develops expertise

A Reframing the Future project team, the Reasonable Adjustment Action Group (RAAG), was formed by volunteers from different delivery teams across the Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE to address the vexing issue of reasonable adjustment for students with a disability. Participants used storytelling to relate issues from different vocational areas and to look at generic, systemic alternatives rather than compartmentalising 'problems' to individual delivery issues for specific staff members.

A teacher summarised what changed for her as a result of being involved:

I have learnt so much from working on this project. I don't have to know all the answers. I now have a network of people I can refer to who face situations just like mine and we can work out possible solutions together.

Project coordinator Francis Howes from Cooloola Sunshine and facilitator Judy Gronold, from Wide Bay TAFE, designed a workbased learning process that started out with awareness raising sessions about the concept of reasonable adjustment and the implications for teachers and assessors of Standards 8 and 9 of the AQTF. Using formal meetings and informal opportunities, the participants then engaged in professional conversations to identify and work through multiple solutions to concrete challenges. In developing solutions, they focused on the learner, industry standards and Training Package requirements.

The results are impressive. Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE now has a network of individuals dispersed through delivery teams who have specific knowledge and practical understanding of reasonable adjustment. The project team has identified three systemic solutions to recommend to the Academic Board. And a working party has formed to develop and modify equitable and clear processes for people with a disability who need flexibility in their training or assessment. Working party members include the institute's Disability Services and Risk Assessment and Quality Assurance Officers.

The storytelling approach also produced a range of representative case studies outlining training and assessment issues and actions to use with students with varying abilities.

Goodwill Industries Inc WA

RTO increases the retention of information by workers with an intellectual disability

In 2002 Goodwill Industries introduced competency-based training and assessment for supported workers with cerebral palsy in its metals manufacturing section. At that stage they were primarily interested in developing training and assessment strategies, resources and tools consistent with competency standards and individual worker's communication abilities and styles.*

Retention of core information, particularly information about the safe operation of equipment, became a concern for trainers and supervisors. The Reframing the

Future project team wondered about the extent to which workers could not only recall the information covered during classroom training but also apply it in real work situations, sometimes weeks after an off-the-job training session. Hence, the project team concentrated on finding innovative strategies for delivery and assessment for people with differing retention rates.

With support from specialists and from their facilitator, Chris Evans from West Coast Training Solutions, the project team developed a system to evaluate retention levels so that flexible training strategies could be put in place to cater for the needs of grouped participants. An assessment tool to determine the transfer of knowledge from off-the-job training to workplace practices over time was also developed, trialed and modified.

Throughout the Reframing the Future project, participants improved on their skills in observing, questioning and problem solving while they continuously invented and refined tools, strategies and approaches. Among other techniques participants found that they had to develop picture and photographic 'questions' when their usual methods of questioning were problematical with non-verbal workers. All this puts the concept of assessment moderation into a different light when compared with mainstream provision.

* To read more about Goodwill Industries' innovative approaches to training and assessment see Mitchell J (2003) *Emerging Futures*, ANTA, Melbourne and Mitchell, J. Young, S. McKenna, S. and Hampton, C. (2002) *110 ways to implement the national training system*, ANTA, Melbourne.

KAL Multimedia Training

Small private RTO explores reasonable adjustment solutions

The Reframing the Future project provided staff with information about the diverse training and assessment processes needed to assist people with disabilities to gain skills and qualifications in four industry areas – IT, Children's Services, Floristry and Screen.

This small private training provider combined, on the one hand, face-to-face presentations from guest speakers on particular disability areas and industry requirements with, on the other hand, team-based work activities and trials of new processes, tools and resources. Staff researched readily available resources through ANTA and DEST websites to adapt for their students' needs, training contexts and levels. The disabilities researched included specific learning disorders such as dyslexia and attention deficit disorder. Staff then explored practical strategies to reasonably adjust training and assessment to fit the individual student's needs, taking into account Training Package and industry requirements.

New strategies included changing how learning material and assessment tasks were presented to students as well as negotiating additional time for learning or assessment with the student. Staff then shared their experiences and new learning with each other at scheduled staff meetings.

Facilitator Karen-Anne Montgomery reported that:

The new skills achieved by the RTO staff, particularly sessional staff, means they can now develop innovative training and assessment strategies, processes and tools to support particular students with specific disabilities.

Brisbane North Institute of TAFE

Institute-wide staff development focuses on reasonable adjustment of assessment

Developing assessment strategies, processes and tools which recognise that learners may require teachers to use a variety of strategies to collect evidence and to make judgements about competency was the goal of this project at Brisbane North Institute of TAFE.

Teaching staff with varying levels of experience were recruited from six campuses of Brisbane North Institute of TAFE to participate in the project. They worked within their own Training Package areas of horticulture, business services, animal sciences and construction so that the processes developed were relevant to their existing practice.

Before the Reframing the Future project many participants said they were unaware of the details of equity and disability policies and legislation. They were not confident that adjusted assessment strategies to cater for specific students would be regarded as valid by other students or teaching peers. Moreover, they also indicated a lack of knowledge about student support services available through the institute or from allied community organisations.

The facilitator, Mike Vincent, designed an action learning process that included face-to-face workshops for presenting specialist information and for group discussion and consensus. These workshops were combined with further learning and the trialing and review of new strategies used in the workplace with teaching teams or work units. A 'Reasonable Adjustment Document' was produced by the participants, which pulled together their new knowledge and experiences.

Evidence gathered for an evaluation of the Reframing the Future project showed that all participants had gained a better understanding of equity principles and reasonable adjustment methods as well as a positive attitude and willingness to implement 'reasonable adjustment'. In addition they had developed specialist and peer networks as sources of information and support for themselves and their work teams.

Brite Industries

Improving workplace assessment assists workers with an intellectual disability

Workplace learning strategies were used by the facilitator Tina Berghella to raise the VET awareness of staff at Brite Industries, a supported workplace in Broadmeadows, Victoria. At the outset of the project, Tina designed a game of VET Trivial Pursuit to identify skill and knowledge gaps and to help prioritise topics the participants wished to focus on throughout the project. From there on the participants determined the session topics and information dissemination.

The fourteen participants were all group leaders for teams of people, with intellectual and, in some cases, physical disabilities, who work in jobs in the packaging industry. Brite Industries is in the process of training and assessing the team members with a disability in the Certificate I in Process manufacturing in the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package. The group leaders – many of whom have a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment – were collecting observable performance evidence in the workplace while a specialist external assessor was collecting evidence of underpinning knowledge.

The group leaders needed to gain a better understanding of the AQTF, in particular the concepts of assessment validation and moderation. Prior to the Reframing the Future project, group leaders were working as a team in production-related matters but were working in isolation on the evidence gathering and did not feel confident about evaluation.

During the Reframing the Future project they were able to work through questions about the interpretation of competency standards and performance criteria and the evidence gathering tools they were using. They also explored how to maintain the integrity of assessments in relation to the concept and practice of 'reasonable adjustment'.

'What communication skills are needed for specific job functions?' emerged as another key question during the project, so some time was spent brainstorming communication and its relationship to safety and behaviour on the job. As a result Brite Industries CEO, Mike Alcock, has applied for external funding in 2004 to help improve communication on-the-job.

Southbank Institute of TAFE

Clear information assists learners with a disability to make 'informed choices'

Finding a suitable training or career path can be a big challenge for a person with a disability and those supporting them. Staff at Southbank Institute of TAFE in Brisbane decided to clarify the information prospective students with disabilities might need in order to make good career and VET choices. They investigated 34 qualifications. The provision of 'clear course information including content and vocational outcomes prior to enrolment' is a requirement of AQTF Standard 6.3 – Access and equity and client service.

In order to identify the information needed by prospective students with disabilities, project facilitator Sue Handyside devised an action learning process in which staff working in seven Training Package areas identified essential skill requirements in specific qualifications. These requirements were then entered onto a template. At the same time strategies for inclusive and anti-biased teaching practices were introduced to the participants through workshops, contact with Disability Support Officers and resources placed on the staff intranet. Finally, the information developed by the participants was collated into a draft brochure, which was then critically reviewed by participants and other key stakeholders.

'It was good to reflect on what skills are needed for the job outcomes and to have that fresh in my mind. I feel this project is an essential process for any teaching team', said one participant about the Reframing the Future staff development project. Participants agreed that it would be beneficial if all teachers thought more carefully about what physical and mental abilities are required to perform core competencies in the vocational areas they deliver in.

Making the collated information available to school career guidance officers and disability coordinators in regional areas was identified as a valuable future activity for the institute.

Taree Adult Education Inc

Cluster of ACE colleges develops accessible learning places for people with a disability

This two-tiered project involved the nine Adult and Community Education (ACE) college campuses in the Mid-North Coast Cluster of New South Wales. The colleges pooled their resources to engage in a professional development program for their management, administration and VET delivery staff and a parallel program to assist college managers to develop and implement disability access plans tailored for each site. The project was coordinated by Kathy Wright of Taree Adult Education, one of the cluster members.

Given the wide geographic base of the cluster, the opportunity to meet and work through common concerns and find common solutions at cluster-wide facilitated workshops was valued by the participants. Participants shared a wide range of practice in their workshops as each college was at a different stage of experience with students with a disability. The networking benefit was very positive. A cluster website has enabled participants to maintain networks and post resources and teaching ideas.

The opportunity to transfer workshop knowledge into practice in the workplace benefited all colleges and participants. Often the implementation of theories, such as those about risk assessment and analysis and training support strategies has been difficult in smaller centres. During the project the ability of each college to follow up their specific issues and risks with a consultant in their own environment has been invaluable in establishing sound practices throughout each organisation.

Benefits accrued for participants in different job roles. Administration staff developed strategies to cater for the needs of people with a disability at first point of contact with a training organisation. For managers, the policy and resourcing issues associated with AQTF Standards and legislative compliance have been addressed. Trainers actively developed inclusive teaching strategies for a small range of disabilities. In addition, a resource network was developed with key local disability groups for advice and support as required.

As a result of the Reframing the Future project the ability of the colleges has greatly increased to promote the ACE community college as a supportive learning place.

The Bremer Institute of TAFE

Trade delivery staff learn about disabilities

The twenty trade delivery staff who participated in this project were from the automotive, construction, horticulture and metals areas.

Linkages made to relevant Commonwealth and state legislation and the AQTF Standards by project facilitators Janette Atchison and Caroline Zinnerman from Bremer Institute of TAFE stimulated open and broad discussion about changing practice in order to work more sensitively with all students. Practical utilisation of teaching, learning and assessment supports such as adaptive technologies, computerised assistance, a slower pace, interpretive approaches and individual tutoring were introduced as rights for the student and tested by the teachers in their workplace.

Discussions about undisclosed disabilities led many of the teachers to talk from personal experiences, such as the prevalence of arthritis among carpenters and the ability of industry to adjust machinery and invent technical aids to support the continued employment of existing workers. It then made sense to do the same for students: that is, to make adjustments to training and assessment to account for a disability. The project coordinator, Janette Atchison, commented in her evaluation of this Reframing the Future project that the teachers 'came up with their own examples about disability from everyday life – they normalised the odd'.

Another rich area for discussion involved the relationship between perceived 'school learning deficits' and taking up a trade. So it also made sense to look at the actual literacy and numeracy levels required by Training Packages and to provide students with appropriate, thoughtfully designed competency-based learning contexts, resources and assessment tasks.

Participants expressed a greater level of unease about dealing with students with intellectual, psychiatric and mental disabilities. However, as the project was facilitated by the student support unit, a more trusting relationship opened up and led to a better exchange of information and referrals between the unit and the trade areas. The student support unit found the support of the Program Delivery Manager, Arthur Ryan, to be a key factor in engaging the interest of the trade areas and teachers participating in the project.

Cumberland Industries Limited

Learning organisation model underpins development of new approaches

The CEO, Dr Steven Treloar, and the Board of Cumberland Industries were very supportive of this Reframing the Future project as they are committed to developing their business as a learning organisation that will be able to provide national VET qualifications to both staff and their 450 supported employment employees. A Board member participated as a learner in the project. Management also invested considerable resources in rostering and paying for all participants to be released from duties to attend sessions.

One of the first tasks for Frank Price from Directions Australia who facilitated the workbased learning process, was to develop a sense of ownership in the participants about their VET journey by asking them to identify their expectations. All the staff were keen to see the employees with disabilities gain recognition for their work skills and hopefully achieve expanded options in open employment.

The 50 participants from 5 different worksites were divided into 5 learning groups, each of which contained people from different parts of the organisation including administration, management, HR, support workers and supervisors. This learning strategy had the unintended outcome that the participants came to a better understanding of each others' work roles.

In discussion groups, participants worked through how they would apply to work situations their new-found understanding about the AQTF and competency-based training and assessment. Action learning opportunities – where job tasks were identified, discussed and used as material for planning and delivering training to determined standards – helped to reinforce this new knowledge. This included

expanding understandings about how a disability can impact on how people learn new skills and how this learning occurs in a workplace.

Cumberland Industries is now prepared to articulate its organisational training needs in VET terminology evaluate training and assessment services provided by RTOs and assure the quality outcomes for learners/workers with a disability. Many of the staff are excited about undertaking the Certificate IV in the new Training and Assessment Training Package and are looking forward to supporting the employees with a disability in their own VET journeys.

Wodonga Institute of TAFE

Casual staff engage with access and equity and the AQTF

Consultations at the Wodonga Institute of TAFE highlighted the number of casual staff who had never participated in the institute's equity training. So six staff from the equity, professional development and human resource areas formed an action learning project team to design and deliver sessions for more than 30 casual staff on access and equity flowing from the AQTF Standards requirements.

During the design stage the project team consulted with a number of casual teaching staff to assist in the incorporation of meaningful and relevant learning experiences for them. As an initial promotional strategy failed to attract many participants, even though they would be fully paid to attend, a direct mail out to staff home addresses promoting the benefits of the equity sessions did successfully attract a strong response.

Casual and other staff who participated in the Reframing the Future project staff development sessions gained knowledge of and practical strategies in the areas of resolving participation barriers for students with disabilities; awareness of student support services; understanding of relevant legislative and AQTF Standards; exploring and offering a broader range of flexible and inclusive approaches for students with disabilities; and consulting in the workplace to resolve participation issues.

In turn the members of the project team benefited from gaining skills in group work, marketing, negotiation, facilitation and project management. They improved their knowledge of TAFE teacher roles and expectations and the AQTF Standards as well as barriers to participation for people with disabilities.

TAFE NSW – Northern Sydney Institute

Inclusive practices embedded in professional development

At Northern Sydney Institute the project coordinator and facilitator Susan Eriksson had noticed a rise in the number of issues for teachers in dealing with students with disabilities. This Reframing the Future project was designed to share and develop expertise between delivery staff and disability teacher consultants to better support students in five different Training Package areas at the higher AQF levels.

While still addressing the original intention, the direction of the project was scaled down and changed in response to participant feedback during the course of the project. The directional change met the real needs of participants at the time.

Issues such as student's rights, reasonable adjustment, course completion and the responsibilities of the classroom teacher were the main topics of discussion at one workshop. Working with students with a psychiatric disability and everyday classroom coping strategies were the topics for another. The intended participants were part-time casual teachers, although strong interest was expressed by permanent staff, many of whom attended the workshops.

With so many part-time staff involved, one of the challenges for the project team was maintaining the continuity of communication going between the face-to-face meetings. This was overcome by the extensive use of emails and phone contact.

An evaluation of the Reframing the Future project showed there was still more work to complete. As a result Northern Sydney Institute will now include inclusive practices in Head Teacher development programs and in new teacher inductions. In addition, professional development programs will be conducted on crisis management and mediation techniques.

The benefits for teachers who participated in the Reframing the Future projects, and their learners, were summed up in these comments from participants:

I don't feel anxious about having a student with a disability in my class now

There are people available to assist mainstream teachers – the strategies we can use for people with specific disabilities can also be used with any student.

Department for Correctional Services

Helping prisoners with intellectual disabilities

The Minister for Correctional Services in South Australia, Mr Terry Roberts, announced the launch of this Reframing the Future project on commercial radio. He shared: 'Currently people with intellectual disabilities may not have the same opportunities as a prisoner without a disability to develop their educational and work skills within the prison environment'. With the assistance of Reframing the Future funding, the Department for Correctional Services set out to redress a few of the non-systemic causes of this situation through a staff development project for prison education officers. Professional development for these officers is rare, as most are employed as hourly paid instructors.

The project achieved two outcomes. Firstly, the participants grew in their understandings about learning difficulties, learning disabilities and mental illness and the associated training issues and strategies. Secondly, they used this knowledge to develop case studies about a particular learner that included new ways they had tried to engage the person in learning, as well as how they now tried to facilitate the person's learning.

The facilitator, Prue Madsen, felt that the workplace learning/case study methodology worked very well in this context as it enabled the prison education officers to take ideas back into their workplace and encouraged the use of experimentation and reflection to identify the best possible strategies for individuals.

Participants in the Reframing the Future project were introduced, many for the first time, to flexible learning resources such as ANTA toolboxes, which they critiqued for their suitability for learners with intellectual disabilities. Consequently, proposals have been put forward to increase access to improved IT systems within the prison system for both learners and educators.

Developing inclusive practices for students with a psychiatric disability

The aim of this Reframing the Future project was to develop staff skills and a knowledge base about how to become more strategic in providing educational support in pre-enrolment, enrolment and learning settings as well as in work placements, for students who may have a psychiatric disability.

Among the workbased learning methods used by project coordinator Peta Smith and facilitator Heather Beebe was reflective practice. One participant, a sessional teacher commented, 'The reflective journal entries I am doing help me lower my stress... when I write it down it means I can think better about the strategies I use.'

Participants found that a workbased action learning approach provided a suitable forum to devise real solutions to real problems. Using guest speakers who are or were students with a psychiatric disability helped to ground and provide meaning for many participants.

Some teachers' perceptions that providing adjustments for students with a psychiatric disability might compromise an assessment event were recast as 'using modified modes of assessment' by the project coordinator and facilitator. This enabled participants to reconsider their thinking and to review their practice.

A key message that comes through this project is the notion that a universal alternative – inclusive practices – is possible in teaching and assessment methods. Another message is that professional development is available to assist staff to understand, embed and use the inclusive practices. As the facilitator remarked, teachers may never know until it is too late if a student has not disclosed a disability that might eventually impact on their learning or assessment. Consequently, participants began to experiment with, record and share useful and universal inclusive practice strategies.

This project successfully utilised the Reframing the Future web forum facilities to disseminate information, create discussion and keep participants in the loop. Most of the participants were casual staff who have had few opportunities for professional development in the past and had difficulty timetabling sessions because of their many commitments.

Central TAFE (WA)

Highlighting strategies to deal with specific learning difficulties

The participation of several dyslexic staff members was a benefit for other members of this staff development project that focused on specific learning difficulties. Their willingness to share their experiences personalised and authenticated the range of issues involved. They also helped develop a strong, supportive and more tolerant mentality among the participants, according to project coordinator Margaret Ernest, from Central TAFE in WA.

Basic information about the nature and indicative signs of specific learning difficulties (SLDs), as well as their effect on student performance and suggested teaching techniques were outlined by experts from The Dyslexia-SPELD Foundation WA (Inc) and summarised in a booklet for participants. The SLDs covered included dyslexia,

dysgraphia, dyscalculia and dyschronomia. Ways to optimise learning styles and teaching strategies in order to encourage student learning were then suggested and discussed by participants.

The Reframing the Future project team was excited about the degree of interest in the topic shown by teaching, support and administrative staff. Staff from other organisations also attended information sessions. A session was also presented at the 'Best Practice in Training Forum'. So great was the need for discussion that staff development sessions were lengthened considerably, after feedback from participants, to give participants time to explore more fully the issues and solutions.

The project team found that there was also limited understanding of how the brain works, so a further session on this will be conducted for participants in 2004. This project will also link in with the WebCT shell established through another 2003 Reframing the Future project at Central TAFE.

TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute – IT, Arts and Media Division

Co-mentoring unlocks better teaching and assessment strategies for students with mental illness

Casual staff running Information Technology courses in the NSW TAFE system benefited from work-focused co-mentoring arrangements initiated by project coordinator Nick Westley and facilitator Helen Jenkins during a one day workshop. The mentoring process was supported by journals kept by each participant linking their teaching practice situations with new learning during the Reframing the Future project.

Participants chose a co-mentoring (or peer-level mentoring) methodology rather than the perceived hierarchical arrangement of a mentor/mentee approach on the basis that each person had something to offer the other.

Co-mentors were used for debriefing, sounding out new ideas, expanding knowledge about mental illness and resources and increasing awareness of potential situations. Keeping a journal was felt variously to be a release, a structured reflective tool, a way of thinking about the big picture, and a method to organise notes and key issues. In addition, through being involved in the Reframing the Future project, participants have become more aware of the relevant legislation and the AQTF Standards, in addition to TAFE NSW organisational policies and procedures.

As a result of the project, participants said they have more strategies, greater confidence and less stress in managing both learning and classroom management situations involving students with mental illness. Because of the co-mentoring methodology they felt less isolated in their workplace, even when their mentor lived on the other side of the state.

The project outcomes will be promoted throughout TAFE NSW by the teaching resource '*Classroom Strategies and Case Studies*', which was developed by the facilitator from participants' experiences recorded in the journals and will be available, in 2004, through the TAFE NSW website.

Swan TAFE (WA)

Understanding ADHD – a previously hidden disability in VET

Creating a professional link with the Learning and Attentional Disorders Society of WA (LADS) was a key to the success of this Reframing the Future staff development project. It also fulfilled one of the strategic goals of LADS – to engage more with the education and training sector.

The Reframing the Future project has helped change VET staff's perceptions about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). They are now able to see it as a neuro-physiological condition rather than a behavioural issue. This realisation has freed teachers to embrace teaching methodologies and environments that support learning and ameliorate reactions.

The facilitators used simulated conditions so that participants could experience some of the challenges faced by people with ADHD, relate these to personal experiences in the workplace or classroom and discuss strategies to move forward. These simulation sessions and discussions were run by Disability Services Managers and followed up with information sessions from LADS. The approach was so popular that LADS information sessions for all their staff were taken up by several other business units at Swan TAFE – such as Hospitality, Food Processing and Diversity and Access.

Aspects of the Reframing the Future project have now been incorporated into disability awareness training and have also proved to be very effective. The practical style of delivery plus the ability to reach a wider group has been very positive and will ensure the endurance of the outcomes of the project. ADHD information has also been added to the range of information distributed to staff by Disability Services Managers.

Latrobe Valley Enterprises

Supported workshop staff developing improved training techniques

In addition to being an RTO, Latrobe Valley Enterprises is also a supported workshop for people with disabilities in the business and horticulture industries. Many of the staff team have roles as trainers and assessors as well as providing support to workers with a range of disabilities. All full time staff from management to teachers participated in the Reframing the Future project and this enabled a wide range of opinions and topics to be raised and discussed.

The external facilitator Barry Drayton, who was experienced in action learning methodology, ensured that participants with different job roles and responsibilities took part in discussions, tasks, reflection and evaluations. Everyone had the opportunity to influence the direction of the project.

All the staff now have a better understanding of the components that make up Training Packages, assessment, competency-based training and the AQTF and how they fit together. As the project progressed, cohesiveness developed between staff and management, resulting in a more bonded team.

The staff have also developed practical training and assessment techniques that have improved the quality of training under the AQTF Standards. These techniques are based on a better understanding of various disabilities and how they impact on each

individual's learning ability. From this information participants developed confidence in their own ability to adapt training and assessment techniques to suit students and workers needs, while ensuring compliance with Training Packages and the AQTF.

TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute – ITALIC

Developing rich media learning objects for students with disabilities

A working partnership was established between the Hunter Institute's Teaching and Learning Innovations Centre (ITALIC) learning object developers and the institute's disability advisory staff to find out how to use rich media to develop learning objects that are accessible to students with a range of disabilities and in line with the AQTF Standards.

As an innovation for a Reframing the Future project, a web log was designed as the main way for information and learning to be exchanged. Interestingly, the project coordinator Leigh Blackall from ITALIC, found that face-to-face meetings were still the most effective strategy for engaging and motivating participants. However, the web log proved to be an excellent medium to test the media rich learning objects and get feedback. The products of the learning process, along with other resources, can be viewed at www.accessiblerichmedia.com

After developing an understanding of how AQTF requirements and how disability can impact on the ability to learn in the VET environment in differing ways, meetings were arranged by ITALIC with disability advisory staff to discuss the accessibility of the web log and a list of media rich examples. In addition the participants generated ideas about better online ways to meet the needs of learners with various disabilities.

As a result of the project, an example of an accessible media rich learning object was designed and placed on the website (above) for comment. Ongoing relationships were formed between developers and disability advisory staff so that they each have a greater understanding of the other's work and the types of services concerning disabilities available to staff and students.

Most importantly, accessibility has become a major topic of interest at ITALIC with ideas and new practices flowing on to other institute projects.

Martin College – Cairns Campus

Private RTO staff practicing skills of inclusion

Martin College, a private RTO in Queensland, wanted to improve the quality of its practice in relation to the AQTF Standards by involving all staff in workbased staff development about the inclusion of people with disabilities in training. The project was designed to augment the existing skills and understandings of the participants who came from both the administrative and teaching areas of the college.

The facilitator, Marie O'Dea, conducted the Reframing the Future project in three distinct segments. The first segment utilised the facilitator's specialist skills and knowledge to introduce workbased learning principles, the AQTF Standards and the field of disability. The facilitator then led the participants through a process of discussion, questioning and constructive feedback. Three guest speakers were invited to give insights into the specific requirements of people with particular disabilities.

In the second segment of the project, participants reflected on what they had learned before applying the new knowledge to their work. The third segment consisted of a workshop in which participants reviewed, consolidated and discussed their new understandings and practices and undertook further case studies and group discussion of their respective experiences.

The project activities highlighted the need to establish a process for student enrolment and induction at Martin College, particularly to encourage students to disclose any disability that could impact on their learning. This would involve both teaching and administrative staff.

Through the Reframing the Future project, participants developed skills in self-assessing their knowledge and practice. They were also able to establish a network of disability specialists - based on the three guest speakers - to contact if faced with a problem dealing with a person with a disability. The participants also realised that developing skills and knowledge about inclusion is very much an ongoing and constructive process.

Institute of TAFE Tasmania

Teachers learning from the VET 'journey' of imaginary Annie

This Reframing the Future project took a client-centred approach to developing practices, processes and documentation to support the implementation of AQTF Standards. The participants came from different sections and locations within TAFE Tasmania and represented four Training Package areas - Business Services, Amenity Horticulture, Hospitality and IT. External participants, including a member of the Community Reference Group for TAFE Tasmania's General Education Program, provided additional input.

The facilitator's approach was to take an imaginary student with an intellectual disability called 'Annie' from initial enquiry stage through to the achievement of a qualification. 'Annie's' presence and personality was always at the forefront of discussions, to temper organisational requirements and administrative convenience, while the participants worked through the training, assessment and administration requirements involved with her progression through the system. In her VET journey, 'Annie', like many people with a disability, undertook a mix of general education and Training Package units.

Participants found it easy to focus on the Annie journey during their two day residential workshops. They then undertook individual or group follow-up activities in their workplaces, in between the workshops. Through their own learning journeys they improved their knowledge of the AQTF and training packages. Shirley Haas, the project coordinator and State Manager, General Education reported on several unplanned learning outcomes. These ranged from directly experiencing 'synergy in action', when individual strengths contributed to a greater group output, to understanding of how the 'paper trail' works.

This project has also linked up where relevant with other Reframing the Future and teaching and learning strategies in Tasmania as well as with the VET Equity Advisory Committee, which reports on *Bridging Pathways*. At their last meeting the group formulated a fresh Action Plan for 2004 in order to maintain the momentum, networks and commitment.

Australian Teleservice Association

Clarifying employment and training pathways and support systems for contact centre industry

This project dealt with some practical, immediate issues relating to the training, assessment and employment of people with a disability in the call or contact centre industry. It also brought together employers, RTOs, Human Resource specialists and recruiters in an atmosphere of cultural and attitudinal change that aimed to improve training and employment pathways and opportunities for people with disabilities.

One participant, a human resource manager, commented that before the project she would not have thought about employing or providing on-the-job training for a person with a disability but now she felt it was very possible.

At forums for industry leaders, trainers and recruiters, key questions drew out their ideas about existing drivers and barriers to training, recruiting or employing people with disabilities. These were discussed and recorded and as a result a Workforce Diversity Forum was jointly planned for all the participants to formulate some possible strategies together. In the meantime the disability agency, RTO and recruitment representatives visited Telstra and Contact 121 centres to observe the nature of the work involved and to update their knowledge of the rapidly changing industry.

The Workforce Diversity Forum was co-facilitated by Wendy Perry from Skills Track 21 and staff from Commonwealth Disability Recruitment Services. Participants examined the Disability Discrimination Act and how it might enable rather than impede the employment and training of a person with a disability. Mark Bagshaw, of IBM Australia and Chair of the Australian Disability Training Advisory Council, stimulated the group with a challenging and stirring lunchtime speech before they examined how standard training and assessment processes on and off the job might disadvantage some individuals. The group found that processes negotiated with the student could be made more effective, but that ongoing professional development for trainers was required in this area.

Informed, ongoing networks were established involving people from the industry such as recruiters, training providers, disability support and liaison officers (including the Regional Disability Liaison Officer and Commonwealth Disability Recruitment Services) and the South Australian Bridging Pathways committee.

Manufacturing Learning Victoria

Training providers and employers find solutions in training pathways for workers with a disability

Bringing together training providers and employers in the plastics industry to develop a network at management level for mobilising existing VET pathways for people with disabilities was the aim of this Reframing the Future project.

The supported workplaces in regional Victoria and Melbourne who participated included Central Access in Benalla, Merriwa Industries in Wangaratta, Brite Industries in Broadmeadows and Dual Ware in Footscray. Valuable input was also provided by Paul Tehan, from Goulburn Ovens TAFE from the RTO perspective, and Mike Valentine from JobsPlus, a New Apprenticeships Centre. Paul is also involved in a Workplace

English Language and Literacy (WELL) project in supported workplaces and the two projects informed each other.

Among the questions that the participants explored were ‘What is reasonable adjustment and how can it be implemented?’ and ‘How is the integrity of the assessment process maintained?’ As each of the workshops was held at a different supported workplace, participants used examples from site tours to focus their endeavours. This gave them plenty of material to mull over in addition to an opportunity to showcase their facilities, staff and existing on-the-job induction and training programs.

The facilitator Tina Berghella, from Oggi Consulting, developed different coloured ‘Tracking Sheets’ to identify both the issues raised and the solutions offered during the workshops. The Reframing the Future project group chose to concentrate on one of their solutions by drafting a guide to assessing people with an intellectual disability in the core competencies in Certificate I in Process Manufacturing in the Plastics, Rubber and CABLEmaking Training Package. This is a common pathway to a qualification for staff in supported workplaces.

The group also identified a number of issues and solutions that were outside the scope of the VET system. However, having established a viable network, they may be able to progress these solutions in other arenas.

Sub-program 4

Communities of Practice

This Reframing the Future sub-program involves project teams developing communities of practice that address aspects of the national training system.

For more information about the concept of communities of practice please refer to the publications on the Reframing the Future website <http://reframingthefuture.net>

A total of 3 communities of practice with an Indigenous focus were funded. These communities involved over 60 participants from more than 7 organisations.

A total of 13 disability focused community of practice projects were funded. These communities involved over 340 participants and numerous organisations.

Highlights

Some highlights from the projects include:

- the identification of significant knowledge gaps by community members
- the development of trust and collaboration between stakeholders and the sharing of existing resources
- the gaining of legitimacy of communities of practice within enterprises and within the range of stakeholder groups
- collaboration within communities between the VET sector and the disability sector.

TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute

Indigenous VET trainers share their collective wisdom

The community of practice at TAFE NSW Hunter Institute assisted a group of Indigenous VET practitioners to learn new skills collaboratively so they could implement strategies to improve participation and outcomes for both Indigenous staff and students.

In order to achieve a strengthened network between the members and to create a climate of knowledge, information and resource sharing, Kate Rose, the project coordinator, convened a three day residential workshop away from the workplace and conducted online chats at nominated times. Team building exercises helped to foster trust between the members while they developed a shared commitment to understanding the AQTF.

The members of this Reframing the Future project were Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers, managers and liaison people at Hunter Institute as well as Aboriginal officers in relevant industries. They recognised that the resolution of equity concerns is an important cornerstone in the implementation of a national training system.

The facilitator, Rosalie Amey, created a forum for thinking as well as systems for sharing information. Consequently, experienced staff renewed their interest and their passion while new or isolated staff felt supported. A focus on knowledge management strategies led to talk about how difficult it is to move from a Western-based approach where individuals manage and hold information to an Indigenous-style where practice is informed by collective wisdom.

Kate Rose, the project coordinator, surmises that this opportunity for community of practice members to increase their knowledge, self-esteem and confidence will lead to a more positive environment for both their colleagues and students. In addition, by fostering innovation in teaching, learning and assessment practices during the Reframing the Future project, products and services for the Hunter Institute's Indigenous customers were improved.

WA Arts, Sport, and Recreation Industry Training Council

Exploring a recognition process for Indigenous Sport Development Officers

Ideas for effective skills recognition processes for Indigenous Sport Development Officers were workshopped in a community of practice sponsored by the Arts, Sport and Recreation Industry Training Council (ASRITC) in Western Australia. Some of the ideas discussed were: mapping real examples of evidence to qualifications; plain English information about skills recognition; an assessment process that takes more account of orally-based cultures; and the need for Indigenous assessors.

This Reframing the Future project included eleven Indigenous Sport Development Officers based throughout WA as well as staff from both government and community-based sport and recreation industry employers and a training provider.

An initial web-based communication strategy was not well utilised by participants, so it was not until a face-to-face meeting was held in Perth that working relationships formed. The facilitator, Alison Wright, found that it was through a social meeting that real respect began to be developed within the community. Once mutual respect and trust were acknowledged, participants were more inclined to communicate through emails and web forums.

Much that happened through this community of practice was subtle. While some paper-based resources were developed, the most valuable knowledge was the intangible knowledge that was identified, developed and shared between the members. Through the development of knowledge about the national training system and recognition of current competence processes, the community created Indigenous advocates for skills recognition. It is highly likely that the relationships formed through this community and the knowledge held will be passed on through Indigenous networks.

The non-Indigenous members, in turn, learnt about Indigenous approaches and some of the inherent cultural and historical challenges that Indigenous people face when accessing training or assessment. Alison commented 'The value of this kind of development of people cannot be easily measured and certainly should not be underestimated.'

The Spastic Centre of NSW

Cross-industry collaboration supports young people with disabilities

One of the highlights for this group was the naming ceremony of the group at the last meeting – Staff Professionalism and Training Group. In the beginning commitment to this Reframing the Future community of practice was not strong, as participants thought they were just going to another meeting. However, members commented in their final evaluations that the informal interactive approach, provided by the communities of practice methodology, fostered a rapidly developing group identity, a sense of ownership and feelings of intimacy and trust.

In this project representatives from several organisations offering Adult Training Learning and Support (ATLAS) programs for young people with disabilities collaborated with people from relevant government departments to work out how to map existing unaccredited training to national training package competencies. In addition, guest speakers from RTO's and Traineeship agencies worked with participants to identify partnership models and networks.

The facilitator, Gillian Bonser, maintained a careful balance between open discussion and the delivery of outcomes. Gillian, and project coordinator Deborah Hoffman from The Spastic Centre, sought continuous feedback from the group members, which was used to shape information input, knowledge creation and the activities of the group.

Perhaps the most important benefit from the Reframing the Future project for the organisations involved was the facilitation of cross industry collaboration on a topic so integral to achieving successful outcomes for young people with disabilities. It has opened doors to new industry partnerships, partnerships with RTOs and to innovative change in workplace training within participating organisations. Many participants said they felt they were going back to their workplaces to change things – 'Now that I know what to work on'.

Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE

Literacy, numeracy and access teachers change their practice

This Reframing the Future community of practice brought together teachers from all institutes in Queensland that deliver literacy, numeracy and access programs for learners with a disability, to consider the implications for practitioners of proposed new policies to underpin the introduction of relevant and appropriate nationally accredited training programs.

The facilitator, Bev Charnley, from Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE, used a range of strategies to stimulate proactive responses to the issues raised. These strategies included introducing respected and authoritative guest speakers who were able to explain the policy perspectives that were driving the changes and a forum to discuss both macro and micro issues that impact on learners who repeatedly enrol in literacy and access courses. Bev also strove to establish in the community of practice a willingness to enter into new paradigms of working with students with a disability.

The project enabled members to understand why and how they need to cultivate better links and relationships between VET and the community disability sector to effectively plan and cater for the range of learners' needs. Members listened to each other and collaborated to progress the development of new courses and delivery strategies. They also examined how to provide meaningful pathways for students with disabilities that gave access to Training Package units of competency.

Having reached the stage where they are now actively developing an approach that is solution-focused, the group will continue to network together and, in some cases mentor each other, in the future.

Department of Education, Tasmania – VET Equity Policy Unit

Tasmanian collaboration enhances accessibility for people with a disability

Employers, Registered Training Organisations and disability support agencies in the Launceston area decided to enhance the linkages between them in order to foster a better understanding of VET and to improve access to training for people with disabilities. This Reframing the Future project is one of a number of initiatives being implemented in the Launceston area by the Department of Education and other bodies around this issue.

The job roles of people who gathered at events included training manager, assessor, disability liaison officer, HR manager, speech pathologist, disability advocate, school principal, managing director and student. To cater for such a heterogeneous group, facilitator Judy Speer used a range of practical facilitation methods so that busy members benefited from each opportunity to meet. These methods included using colour coded seating arrangements to mix everyone up; setting dates well in advance; building up pre-existing relationships; and starting a 'questions I'd like answered' list to encourage the flow of information.

A core group of participants at the initial planning session were introduced to the concept of a community of practice. Around this core group a larger network formed of up to 32 people who attended forums and interacted as a highly effective network.

Participants in the larger network relished the discussions from their varied perspectives and the opportunity to connect with a diverse range of locally based organisations. The wide range of organisations participating however, meant that not all issues discussed were relevant to all. Benefits enjoyed by members and their organisations included a greater understanding of how VET could benefit organisations and clients; increased knowledge of networks and resources; potential partnerships; gaining a better understanding of the needs, issues and opportunities of people with disabilities; and developing alternative solutions to common training problems.

Because they feel their work has only just begun, the network will continue into 2004 with ongoing support from the Equity Standards Branch. The community of practice model will also be implemented in Hobart, drawing on the experience initiated by this Launceston group.

NSW Department of Education and Training

Developing a regional network for disability training services

Discovering that armchairs and lounges encouraged informal and relaxed discussion might seem obvious but project coordinator, Tanya Paterson listed it as a highlight for this Reframing the Future community of practice. Why were seating arrangements so important? Most of the participants had never met even though they all worked in the VET or disability sectors in the Hunter area of NSW. The informal approach actually encouraged maximum participation.

Stories were shared – as everyone had a story to tell about a training experience with people with disabilities. The whole group then reflected on the assumptions embedded in each story and the actions taken, with the facilitator, Kerry Rock, asking probing questions. This methodology brought out a number of underlying systemic and attitudinal issues around the group's topic: that is, strategies to increase the capacity of training providers in the Hunter to include people with disabilities in VET Training Package programs.

Organisations invited to participate included public, private and community-based Registered Training Organisations as well as representatives from disability support and business services providers and a university. However, one of the challenges for the group was to engage the RTOs. So they designed a phone survey, conducted by call centre students at a local high school, to find out what certificates local RTOs offered and whether they were interested in taking students with a disability. The responses identified interested RTOs and at the same time informed the RTOs about the project.

The community of practice members found they had not previously had a good understanding of each other's business. They have now made significant inroads on improving the knowledge and information flow between both sectors based on broader networks created through the community of practice.

Swinburne University of Technology – TAFE Division

Partnership supports young learners with complex needs

A core group of people from Swinburne University of Technology and from Jesuit Social Services Gateway Program formed a Reframing the Future community of practice to explore how their organisations could inform each other's practice in order to enhance training options for youth at risk.

Workshops were designed for staff from both organisations to get together and address areas of knowledge new to them. A project evaluation showed that each group expanded their knowledge of support services for young learners with complex needs. For example, the Gateway Program participants gained a greater understanding of the national training system and VET pathway options as well as support services available in TAFE, while the Swinburne teachers gained increased knowledge of community-based professionals and agencies that can assist in supporting their young learners.

As a result of the community's workshops, there is an increased level of commitment to share and change practice on an everyday level. For instance, the community sector participants are now including VET options and outcomes into their goal setting with their clients.

The participants also identified further professional development needs for themselves. These included the Gateway staff obtaining Workplace Assessor and Training qualifications and Swinburne staff will seek to develop additional strategies for teaching and supporting young people.

The Reframing the Future project has acted as a catalyst in building a collaborative partnership between the two organisations. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed committing each partner to explore joint venture projects and research opportunities and Swinburne will include Jesuit Social Services staff in their professional development events. Swinburne is also mapping informal competency achievements in Gateway skill development programs with a view to developing recognition and credit into VET courses.

NSW – Department of Education and Training – Training and Development Unit

Designing access to VET programs for mature age workers with an acquired disability

Mature Worker Program Project Officers throughout NSW have a key role in assisting workers aged over 45 years. A group of these project officers in the Hunter region participated in a Reframing the Future community of practice to build skills, networks and knowledge in relation to helping mature workers with an acquired disability access training and employment options. Other members of the community of practice included staff from RTOs, DET NSW project officers, and local employment services providers.

Learning exactly what constitutes a disability in the context of training and developing a stronger sense of how assistance can be provided were highlights of the project, according to Sally Heycox, the Project Coordinator. By developing networks with training providers the project officers improved their understanding of the obligations of training providers – in relation to AQTF Standards – to students with disabilities.

The community of practice developed the hypothesis that if project officers in the Mature Age Workers Program undergo VET training to gain the skills they need to successfully work with people with disabilities, they will then improve the participation rates for people with disabilities in VET through training. To begin testing the hypothesis, the group explored various VET pathways for the project officers that complemented their job role. This exercise was beneficial in introducing members to the national training system.

The members of the community of practice believe the hypothesis was proven. For instance, in evaluating the impact of the Reframing the Future project, one of the project officers commented: 'I am now able to educate my clients about their rights in the VET system'. This new knowledge is already driving some of the changes in the service that clients are receiving through the mature workers program.

Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST)

Connecting the disability sector and the VET sector

This Reframing the Future community of practice aimed to foster a better understanding between members of the disability support and employment sector on the one hand and the VET sector and the national training system on the other. After a shaky start and a change of facilitator the group found its feet by focusing on an achievable task. Members actively engaged in decision-making about the task and, once the decision was made, developed an information resource featuring a series of positive case studies, which could inform employers and public and private Registered Training Organisations.

The case studies focus upon positive examples of people with disabilities who have accessed and qualified within the VET sector. The case studies also provide stories about genuine barriers to access as well as recognising the mechanisms that foster good VET and employment outcomes.

Eight people from the VET and VET in Schools area and seven people from disability-related organisations formed the Reframing the Future community of practice. They were managers or chairs of disability support or employment agencies and RTOs, and policy officers in DFEEST as well as the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services. The members were all representatives on the South Australian Bridging Pathways Committee.

An early and continuing challenge was to understand, accept and adopt each other's jargon and acronyms. The facilitator, Mark Waters, found that once this issue was highlighted within the group, members could communicate and work together more smoothly on tasks and find out about each other's perspectives and functions.

The knowledge, practice and passion held by individual Reframing the Future community of practice members have now been released, shared and utilised.

Regional Arts Australia

Partnerships recognise the skills of volunteers with a disability in regional arts organisations

VET providers from across Australia formed a Reframing the Future community of practice with regional arts and cultural sector partners and disability organisations to further develop staff skills in training and assessment strategies. The focus of the group was on providing training and assessment for people with disabilities who are volunteers in their local arts community in non-metropolitan areas of Australia.

The communities of practice methodology enabled different understandings to be compared about training and assessment and issues of access under the AQTF Standards. Comparing different understandings created a desire in the members for more knowledge about the AQTF and VET system.

The community of practice facilitated by Georgie Davill of Community Arts Network SA, established an open environment conducive to collaborative learning and the development of a model of good practice for practitioners.

Members felt more comfortable with the fact that they did not know everything about the issues tabled. The community used a range of participatory and creative activities to solicit and resolve fears, concerns and challenges that face small not-for-profit RTOs in their thinking and actions on issues of access.

Many aspects of the AQTF Standards entered the discussion during small group activities and were threaded back into the whole community. These aspects of the AQTF included modifying assessments, appropriate marketing, promotion and enrolment strategies and appropriate resources. Other topics covered included networking with key local people who have disability expertise and networking with key national and state industry bodies.

In the future members hope to be able to call on each other to implement ideas, tackle problems and find solutions together. The members found the communities of practice methodology suited their work environments and they now see many new Communities starting up around them.

Challenger TAFE (WA)

Collaborating to maximise knowledge about services for students with psychiatric illness

The disabilities associated with psychiatric illness, its episodic nature, and the impacts on adult learning and VET participation are not well understood in the VET sector. This Reframing the Future community of practice set out to find some answers and work out better ways of catering for students with this disability.

The community of practice consisted of VET staff and staff from psychiatric illness support and therapeutic organisations, including a nurse who dealt with people experiencing their first psychotic episode. The group used a very fluid framework in order to explore possibilities fully. Identifying differences in organisational culture and recognising their skill gaps up front assisted members to subsequently concentrate on similarities and common concerns and to develop a collaborative working style. In the end, mutual trust became more important than differences in organisational culture.

The greatest benefit to individuals and organisations involved was the identification of people – both inside and outside the VET system – and organisations and literature that can support people with a mental illness. The members of the community of practice learnt about relevant organisations, how to contact them, how to cross-refer, and how to maximise the support that already exists. One of the challenges for the facilitator, Suzette Thompson from Challenger TAFE, was the sheer amount of information generated, deciding what to pursue, what to keep and how to document it. In return, non-VET members got a realistic picture about how VET works.

Most importantly, members of the Reframing the Future community of practice want to continue to work together to develop appropriate pathways and processes which will enable students contending with psychiatric disabilities to more easily access and achieve success in VET programs.

Open Learning Institute of TAFE

Statewide disability services officers collaborating to improve practice

Disability Services Officers (DSOs) from all TAFE institutes in Queensland joined together in a Reframing the Future community of practice to share information about their day-to-day and systemic issues as well as to learn from each other about good practice and innovation. Learning from each other is important, as many of the community of practice members work in isolation from their peers, yet are expected to provide a high level of disability expertise in their institute.

The project coordinator Cathy Easte and facilitator, Ted Rosenblatt, from the Open Learning Institute of TAFE in Queensland, structured the project to build common ground and to enable open dialogue to emerge. A face-to-face meeting at the beginning, then another halfway into the project, gave everyone the opportunity to meet and get to know each other. These meetings were followed up with monthly teleconferences. As a result, the members were able to feel, many for the first time, that they belonged to a community of practitioners.

Using their wide variety of experiences, expertise and access to key information, members tackled the development of agreed concepts about their role as a DSO and how to work together to improve practice across the state. Products that have emerged are a DSO Administration Manual and the beginnings of a Disability Resource Kit. Members also drew on further information and knowledge about the national training system, the AQTF, the Disability Discrimination Act and state and federal policies about access and equity provided by guest speakers.

Project coordinator Cathy Easte watched the Reframing the Future group become more supportive of each other and noticed a growing willingness to share resources that was encouraging and energising. Many group members already report positive benefits for their institutes and students. The community would like to be ongoing as members see there are still significant issues that remain unaddressed. They are investigating ways to underpin its continuance.

The Bremer Institute of TAFE

Intranet resource underpinning access for people with a disability

The area of Queensland covered by The Bremer Institute of TAFE has a higher than average population of people receiving a disability support pension. This Reframing the Future community of practice was one of a suite of local initiatives to develop ways to improve access to training and employment for people with a disability.

AQTF Standard 6 'Access and equity and client service' was used as a guide to benchmark the members' activities. Undertaking a gap analysis against the Standard, with the reference to '*Fair Go in Training for people with a Disability: meeting your AQTF responsibilities*'* enabled members to make a plan for action that underpinned the learning of the group. The benefit for the institute was the development of a comprehensive strategy to implement Standard 6 and to some degree Standards 7, 8 and 9.

Members included teachers and tutors, an AQTF auditor, the Liaison Librarian and a disability expert. This mixture of experts and people with field experience informed the group's discussions and decisions. The acquisition and sharing of new, current

knowledge about disabilities as well as sources of information about access, teaching and assessment strategies was initiated and modelled by Cathy Easte, a disability expert, then filtered through the classroom experience of other community members. This informal or 'field' knowledge was an important ingredient in ensuring that the intranet-based disability information resource they mutually developed was relevant to, and useful for, practitioners.

The group also delved into the concept of reasonable adjustment in a range of units of competence, discovering that some traditional assessment methods, such as written tests or assignments, may not be the most appropriate for gathering assessment evidence for all students or for meeting industry expectations.

The challenge for community members now is to engage solid support from program delivery managers to disseminate their learning and the resource through all the delivery areas of the institute. They will also need to continuously update the intranet resource. To progress these new aims the group will hold a renewal workshop early in 2004.

**available from <http://www.training.qld.gov.au/aqtf/disability/pdf/fairgo.pdf>*

Sub-program 4

Industry Training Networks

This Reframing the Future sub-program involves the formation and maintenance of networks of VET stakeholders focused on increasing training provision. The members of the network normally include not just providers but also representatives of industry and enterprises that require training.

One industry training network with an Indigenous focus was funded. This network involved over 30 participants from more than 4 organisations.

A total of 4 disability networks were funded. These communities involved over 147 participants from numerous organisations.

Highlights

Some highlights from the projects include:

- an increased understanding of industry needs in a wide range of settings
- a strengthening of new partnerships between industry and providers
- the development of training delivery options
- the awareness of the projects' potential contribution to economic and community development
- a focus on AQTF compliance and quality standards.

Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE

Developing the trust of Indigenous health workers implementing training and recognition options

This Reframing the Future industry training network brought together the local health industry, TAFE, and the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop common goals around implementing the Population Health section of the Health Training Package. As the Training Package endorsement was delayed, members concentrated on activities to more broadly facilitate and enhance training pathways in health for Indigenous people. Consequently, plans are now also underway to look at ways to advance training and recognition options for currently employed Indigenous workers and future employees.

Indigenous members combined their role as employed staff in health organisations with their connections to Indigenous communities by acting as contact points to elders and others in their community. They were particularly helpful in highlighting the need for greater cultural awareness by employers and trainers and in describing issues for the Indigenous community about training, traineeships and recognition processes.

Participants in this Reframing the Future project benefited individually from sharing resources and gaining vital knowledge about the national training system, Indigenous culture, training issues, employment issues and opportunities. They were able to share this new knowledge with others in their respective organisations.

Having established links and trust with each other, the network members feel better equipped to maintain contact during 2004 to support the delayed implementation the Population Health qualifications in the Cooloola Sunshine area.

Business Training Advisory Board (ACT) Inc

Network generating opportunities in New Apprenticeships for young people with a disability

Jane Brownbill, the Executive Director of the Business Training Advisory Board, coordinated and facilitated a Reframing the Future Industry Training Network to create a best practice model for training, placement and employment for people with disabilities in the ACT. A booklet developed by the network to assist in opening up opportunities for people with disabilities undertaking New Apprenticeships within companies in the ACT was launched in November 2003 by the ACT Minister for Health and Community Services, Mr Bill Wood MLA.

The core working party for the network involved representatives from RTOs, other training advisory boards, employment and apprenticeship providers, the ACT Chamber of Commerce, government departments and disability service providers. The working party became deeply aware of each other's jobs and related networks as well as the challenges of working together to achieve shared goals and outcomes. Consequently, a strong respect for the difficulties faced by different groups deepened as the project progressed.

Another group of up to 50 people participated in network forums and events. Their ideas were utilised by the working group to inform the development of the booklet mentioned above.

Jane used a variety of methods to bring the network together, to determine what it could accomplish, and to keep the focus on the agreed tasks within a short timeframe of four months. These methods included staff development sessions for members on both the national training system and the disability sector. Ongoing public acknowledgement of the efforts of working party members proved an important motivator.

Human Services Training Advisory Council – Northern Territory

Sharing knowledge about the national training system generates options for people with a disability

The Katherine (Northern Territory) Industry Training Network initially needed structure and formality to ensure participants were engaged. The network then progressed to the point where decisions were made about how to gain the most value from individual and collaborative participation.

Network members embarked on a process of acquiring, creating, sharing and using knowledge about funding opportunities to support people with disabilities in training and the workforce; about what roles and responsibilities their different organisations have in relation to education and/or employment and/or disability support; and about key aspects of the national training system such as Training Packages and the AQTF.

Reframing the Future project coordinator, Michele Bailey, set up a page dedicated to the project on the Human Services Training Advisory Council's website <http://www.hstac.com.au/> This assisted members to access information easily and to use an interactive issues register to ask the project team questions or make comments. Network members were also included on an email distribution list and regularly receive and exchange information on disabilities and Vocational Education and Training (VET). Three face-to-face meetings were held in Katherine and people in other regional centres of the Northern Territory have recently shown an interest in joining the network.

One difficulty for the network was getting 'buy in' from local employers due to a slowdown in local economic activity. However, the Katherine branch of the NT Chamber of Commerce and Industry is involved with, and very supportive of, the network. The challenge for the network for 2004 is to engage employers and industries more effectively. Michele sees the network as a key step in generating real training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the Katherine area.

Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE

Network supports employment goals of young people with disabilities

For this Reframing the Future Industry Training Network, facilitator Bev Charnley from Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE (CSIT), sought to establish a coalition of key education and training, disability and employment services providers on the Sunshine Coast of Queensland. The group acted as an 'employment incubator'. One of the main challenges the group faced was to clarify the cohort of people with disabilities that were to be considered during the project. The group decided to focus on young people who, with some support, may obtain employment.

The members found that no one member held all the up-to-date information and knowledge that needed to be shared for the network to move forward, such as information about traineeships. In response, individual network members brought to the Network's forums the knowledge they had acquired from distinct job roles. Members also searched the Internet to find out how other countries in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD) were solving issues of access and equity in training and employment. As a result they felt they developed a big picture view of their work and this started to drive the network's collective vision, encapsulating training pathways for their focus cohort, young people.

A benefit for network members and their organisations was a better understanding of their various roles and responsibilities. This understanding is useful in a system in which differing fiscal and policy guidelines apply to organisations with different but related or linked functions and outcomes for clients. Another benefit from participation in the network was the development of collegial relationships between agencies that are to some degree business competitors. The network changed competitive, business relationships to a more cooperative relationship based on a community development model.

Reframing the Future network members are hoping to continue their activities as a welcome sub-group of the CSIT Industry Reference Group.

Communications and Information Technology Training Ltd

Disseminating the business case for equity in training and employment

During the progress of this Reframing the Future project, the participants in the industry training network identified a range of barriers to creating the necessary changes leading to increased training and employment of equity groups in the communications and IT industries.

The project was coordinated and facilitated by Dominic Schipano, Lyndell Goldspink and Kerry Ives from Communications and Information Technology Training Ltd (CITT). It involved people from several organisations in various states and territories that provide training and employment in industries such as call centres and IT businesses.

Assisted by new information about the training system, the network members identified issues and successful practices in related industries. They also identified potential support services and funding possibilities. Members realised that often the barriers may not exist within individuals with disabilities but with the work environment, organisational policies or systems. They suggested that their personal practice might be better supported if equity groups were marketed as productive people who make money not cost money.

Members were inspired by strategies used by Australia Post to increase employment of Indigenous people and the imaginative but practical training approach by Capital Careers in the ACT. They were also influenced by persuasive arguments in the business case made by Mark Bagshaw of IBM, and joint chair of the Australian Disability Training Advisory Council (ADTAC).

Network members who attended a forum and workshop, facilitated by Wendy Perry, said they would consider redesigning their programs to look at terminology, the barriers for individuals with disabilities and delivery practices. They also became aware that they needed the support and influence of human resource, training and general managers to bring about deep organisational change.

The ability of network members to resource each other, find and share new resources, engage with the VET and equity information systems and connect with good practice will benefit their organisations. For CITT the project has generated a strong interest in examining equity issues and solutions during reviews of industry training packages.

Sub-program 4

Assessor Networks

This Reframing the Future sub-program involves the formation and maintenance of networks of assessors focused on improving assessment services. The networks formally consist of participants who are actively involved in delivering assessment services in VET.

In 2003, 2 projects focusing on disability formed assessor networks, involving around 45 participants from several organisations.

Highlights

Some highlights from the projects include:

- the examination of current assessment instruments
- the engagement of the participants with a range of stakeholders in assessment-related issues.

Lesley Wemyss Training Consultancy

Isolated RTOs focus on assessment and inclusive practices

RTO's and their staff in three regions of Queensland – Mt Isa, Townsville and Rockhampton – were given an opportunity to form a network in order to moderate and improve their assessment tools and procedures in relation to inclusive practices for students with a disability and the AQTF.

Facilitator and project coordinator, Lesley Wemyss, an expert in assessment, found that the networking 'refreshment function' at the end of each workshop was well supported in these 'dry' regional areas and further contributed to building long-term collaboration and networking. This might be because some participants travelled more than 500km to get there and then spent a busy day workshopping about all aspects of assessment.

Two workshops were held in each region. In between the workshops, participants trialed new knowledge in the workplace and communicated by email with the facilitator and each other. The facilitator also provided the members with access to up-to-date resources and information in order to stimulate thinking and activities that these regional people don't often get the opportunity to experience.

By the end of the project, RTO's, and assessors had a process by which they could confidently meet AQTF Standards 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3. They also developed action plans to improve the quality and consistency of assessment for all their clients, especially those with a disability, and workshopped methods to increase the attendance of people with a disability in their courses. The workshops examined in depth a variety of assessment tools and processes, and tailored a moderation checklist for use within their organisations. Participants in the workshop had a better understanding of the concepts and practices involved in the 'reasonable adjustment', 'sufficiency', 'moderation' and 'quality and quantity of evidence' of assessment for all students.

In each region participants established a network and voted on a network leader, setting a date for their first 2004 meeting, so that public, private and enterprise RTOs, assessors and disability experts could continue to network on relevant issues.

Directions Australia

Network demystifies assessment issues and streamlines processes

This Reframing the Future project brought together, in an Assessor Network focused on assessment of learners with disabilities, a group of participants who had known each other for some time but had never met face-to-face. Organisations represented in the network were drawn from two states and from rural, city and regional locations. Dianne Wallace from Directions Australia coordinated the project, while Frank Price also from Directions Australia facilitated.

A two-day Assessor Network Forum resulted from extensive consultation with the participants which engendered a high level of ownership of the program. Guest speakers included representatives from the two relevant state training authorities. Before and after the Forum, web-based forums provided by Directions Australia and Reframing the Future assisted participants to communicate with each other and the facilitator. The 29 participants included trainers and assessors, support workers, training managers, employment placement officers and administrative staff – all with diverse levels of experience.

After the participants had demystified issues and streamlined assessment strategies, processes and tools at the Forum, they took their new levels of knowledge and experience back to their own workplaces, with renewed enthusiasm. Topics covered at the Forum included the AQTF Standards; how assessment processes can be adjusted to support learners with disabilities; and understanding the national training system and ANTA strategies such as Bridging Pathways.

Organisations involved in the network benefited by being able to access a range of moderated assessment processes that were developed at the Forum. They are also confident that the assessment decisions of their staff are valid and reliable.

The Network members will continue to communicate through email and a newsletter to be distributed by Directions Australia.

Sub-program 5

Applying Information and Research

This Reframing the Future sub-program encourages staff to access and use information and research findings as an integral part of their professional practice in implementing the national training system.

One project was conducted in this sub-program in the disability area and around 16 participants from 4 organisations were involved.

A highlight from the project was the development of an innovative and collaborative model of skills recognition for workers with an intellectual disability.

Research informs a model of skills recognition for people with an intellectual disability

Participants in this project set out to find current research and information about assessment recognition processes for people with an intellectual disability in the VET system, to evaluate it and then to use it, to develop models of assessment for their clients and employees.

The participants came from three business units within Barkuma Incorporated - a multifaceted agency that provides support for people with an intellectual disability in South Australia. These included: Barkuma Industries, a business services provider; Personnel Employment, an open employment agency; and Disability Training Australia, an RTO. Representatives from Interwork, a peer specialist employment agency and RTO also participated.

When the project leadership team undertook a desk search for useful information or research they found very little was available. Consequently, a specialist from the Public Health Information Development Unit at the University of Adelaide was engaged to look deeper into research and information data nationally and internationally. As a result, participants were eventually able to work from a comprehensive list of published works. They then explored the papers for applicability and relevance and brought in an expert on workplace assessment to help further develop their concepts. It was found that the most valuable sources of specialist information on this topic are probably in unpublished 'grey matter' sources.

The facilitator, Kerry Jones from Disability Training Australia, made a point of including knowledge management terms and processes in most discussions so that the language of knowledge became second nature to the participants. Kerry summed up,

'We needed to remind ourselves regularly that the process was about the generation, exchange and application of knowledge so that we didn't get bogged down in project work'.

She added, 'When there is no one to hold your hand and give you the information, you have to become responsible for your own learning to ensure the project continues to reach its objective.'

The participants used their new understandings about knowledge, the information they found through research and other sources as well as their own experience, to develop a process for skills recognition. The process is centred on a partnership between the worker with a disability (and their advocates), the employer, disability employment agencies and registered training organisations.

This Reframing the Future project also helped improve communication about workplace assessment between the business units and the organisations involved. Participants found ways to sell the benefits of recognition of current competence to employees and employers: 'we now know what we need to know to promote the process'. The businesses involved also understand the VET assessment system better. The Reframing the Future project outcomes will be further utilised in the Skills Passport Project by Disability Training Australia for the Association of Competitive Employment (SA) during 2004.

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INDIGENOUS PROJECTS

Organisation	Sub-program	Focus	Profile Title	Page
<i>Abmusic Aboriginal Corporation</i>	Staff Development	Culturally appropriate teaching and learning strategies	Indigenous RTO uses action research to listen to learners and refresh teaching strategies	16
<i>University of Ballarat TAFE Division</i>	Staff Development	Collaboration – culturally appropriate assessment processes	Culturally appropriate assessment guidelines and tools developed	16
<i>The Royal Life Saving Society Australia (WA Branch)</i>	Staff Development	Collaboration – culturally appropriate support model	Network develops a model for ongoing support of Indigenous trainees	17
<i>East Gippsland Aboriginal Community Development and Employment Program</i>	Staff Development	AQTF and improved participation of Indigenous VET staff	Mentoring increases the confidence of staff at an Indigenous training organisation	18
<i>Ngaanyatjarra Health Aboriginal Corporation</i>	Staff development	AQTF and culturally appropriate practices	Remote Indigenous RTO prefers Standards in a picture language	18
<i>TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute</i>	Community of Practice	AQTF – improved participation of Indigenous staff and students	Indigenous VET trainers share their collective wisdom	36
<i>WA Arts, Sport and Recreation Industry Training Council</i>	Community of Practice	Assessment and recognition processes in high level qualifications	Exploring a recognition process for Indigenous Sport Development Officers	36
<i>Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE</i>	Industry Training Network	Training Packages – pathways and recognition strategies	Developing the trust of Indigenous health workers implementing training and recognition options	48

DISABILITY PROJECTS

Organisation	Sub-program	Focus	Profile Title	Page
<i>Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – delivery and assessment – reasonable adjustment	The Reasonable Adjustment Action Group develops expertise	20
<i>Goodwill Industries Inc WA</i>	Staff Development	Flexible delivery and assessment practices	RTO increases the retention of information by workers with an intellectual disability	20
<i>KAL Multimedia Training</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – delivery and assessment – reasonable adjustment	Small private RTO explores reasonable adjustment solutions	21
<i>Brisbane North Institute of TAFE</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – delivery and assessment – reasonable adjustment	Institute-wide staff development focuses on reasonable adjustment of assessment	22
<i>Brite Industries</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – assessment validation strategies	Improving workplace assessment assists workers with an intellectual disability	22
<i>Southbank Institute of TAFE</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – providing course information to students	Clear information assists learners with a disability make 'informed choices'	23
<i>Taree Adult Education Inc</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – Improved access	Cluster of ACE colleges develops accessible learning places for people with a disability	24
<i>The Bremer Institute of TAFE</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – delivery and assessment practices	Trade delivery staff learn about disabilities	24
<i>Cumberland Industries Limited</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – delivery and assessment strategies	Learning organisation model underpins development of new approaches	25
<i>Wodonga Institute of TAFE</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – improving access, participation and support	Casual staff engage with access and equity and the AQTF	26
<i>TAFE NSW – Northern Sydney Institute</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – delivery and assessment practices	Inclusive practices embedded in professional development	26
<i>Department for Correctional Services</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – delivery practices and flexibility	Helping prisoners with intellectual disabilities	27
<i>TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – inclusive practices	Developing inclusive practices for students with a psychiatric disability	28
<i>Central TAFE (WA)</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – delivery and assessment practices	Highlighting strategies to deal with specific learning disabilities	28
<i>TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute – IT, Arts and Media Division</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – delivery and assessment strategies	Co-mentoring unlocks better teaching and assessment strategies for students with mental illness	29
<i>Swan TAFE (WA)</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – delivery practices	Understanding ADHD – a previously hidden disability in VET	30
<i>Latrobe Valley Enterprises</i>	Staff Development	AQTF – delivery and assessment strategies	Supported workshop staff developing improved training techniques	30

DISABILITY PROJECTS cont'd

Organisation	Sub-program	Focus	Profile Title	Page
TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute (ITALIC)	Staff Development	AQTF – accessible information	Developing rich media learning objects for students with disabilities	31
Martin College – Cairns Campus	Staff Development	AQTF – access and inclusion	Private RTO staff practicing skills of inclusion	31
Institute of TAFE Tasmania	Staff Development	AQTF – information, access and inclusion	Teachers learning from the VET ‘journey’ of imaginary Annie	32
Australian Teleservice Association	Staff Development	Collaboration – training and employment pathways	Clarifying employment and training pathways and support systems for contact centre industry	33
Manufacturing Learning Victoria	Staff Development	Collaboration – training and employment pathways	Training providers and employers find solutions in training pathways for workers with a disability	33
The Spastic Centre of NSW	Community of Practice	Collaboration – training pathways	Cross-industry collaboration supports young people with disabilities	38
Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE	Community of Practice	Access and equity strategies	Literacy, numeracy and access teachers change their practice	38
Department of Education, Tasmania – VET Equity Policy Unit	Community of Practice	Collaboration – access to training pathways	Tasmanian collaboration enhances accessibility for people with a disability	39
NSW Department of Education and Training	Community of Practice	Collaboration – training and employment pathways	Developing a regional network for disability training services	40
Swinburne University of Technology – TAFE Division	Community of Practice	Partnership – training pathways	Partnership supports young learners with complex needs	40
NSW DET – Training and Development Unit	Community of Practice	Collaboration – training and employment pathways	Designing access to VET programs for mature age workers with an acquired disability	41
Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST)	Community of Practice	Training and employment pathways	Connecting the disability sector and the VET sector	42
Regional Arts Australia	Community of Practice	Partnerships – AQTF – delivery and assessment strategies	Partnerships recognise the skills of volunteers with a disability in regional arts organisations	42
Challenger TAFE (WA)	Community of Practice	Collaboration – support and delivery strategies	Collaborating to maximise knowledge about services for students with psychiatric disability	43
Open Learning Institute of TAFE	Community of Practice	Collaboration – support for VET staff and students	Statewide disability services officers collaborating to improve practice	44

DISABILITY PROJECTS cont'd

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<i>The Bremer Institute of TAFE</i>	Community of Practice	AQTF – access and information	Intranet resource underpinning access for people with a disability	44
<i>Business Training Advisory Board (ACT) Inc</i>	Industry Training Network	Collaboration – training and employment options	Network generating opportunities in New Apprenticeships for young people with a disability	49
<i>Human Service Training Advisory Council (NT)</i>	Industry Training Network	Collaboration – training and employment options	Sharing knowledge about the national training system generates options for people with a disability	49
<i>Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE</i>	Industry Training Network	Collaboration – improved employment options	Network supports employment goals of young people with disabilities	50
<i>Communications and Information Technology Training Ltd</i>	Industry Training Network	NTF and training and employment options	Disseminating the business case for equity in training and employment	51
<i>Lesley Wemyss Training Consultancy</i>	Assessor Network	AQTF – assessment and inclusive practices	Isolated RTOs focus on assessment and inclusive practices	54
<i>Directions Australia</i>	Assessor Network	AQTF – assessment strategies practices	Network demystifies assessment issues and streamlines processes	54
<i>Barkuma Inc</i>	Applying Information and Research	Collaboration – assessment and recognition	Research informs a model of skills recognition for people with an intellectual disability	58

