

ACPET:
DELIVERING ON
ACCESS AND
EQUITY ACROSS
AUSTRALIA





A LETTER FROM THE NATIONAL CHAIR

Kay Ganley

I am writing to you in the wake of Australia's most recent and devastating natural disasters in January and early February 2011 with floods washing across almost 80% of Queensland – a land mass the size of France and Germany combined – and across northern New South Wales and Victoria. Floods also swept across Tasmania, cyclones wreaked their destruction across the Top End, and bushfires scorched parts of Western Australia. It has been a heartbreaking time, and no words can diminish the grief of so many of our fellow Australians.

At the same time, we witnessed the tremendous outpouring of community compassion, energy and good old fashioned 'get up and go' across this nation. Each day, we saw thousands of people go to the aid of their neighbours, acquaintances and even complete strangers to help with the massive task of cleaning, clearing and rebuilding.

One of the most striking features during this time was the wonderful diversity of our people reflected in the unrolling media images of destruction, helplessness and sorrow. We saw young and old; Indigenous, European, Asian, African and Pacific; fit and frail; urban and regional; city, bush and sea – and so the mix goes on – all working side by side for a common purpose: our national recovery and renewal. There was no talk during this time of exclusion. Everyone –

not just the exclusive, talented few but everyone – wanted to contribute. And just as significantly, everyone's contribution was welcomed. Similarly, the Australian vocational education and training system is cosmopolitan on the one hand – not only embracing international trends in teaching, but also setting new international benchmarks for success – while having the strengths of regional locality on the other. At this time, more than ever, we must reach out to all Australians who want to be trained, educated and employed so that Australia as a nation can maintain its international standing of economic, social and cultural stature.

In this brochure, ACPET is proud to outline just a few of our achievements in the private training sector, and in particular,

the successes of our diverse members, staff, students and trainees.

In sharing their personal stories, our students and registered training organisations bring things alive for us in a way that plain data can never do. Their stories stimulate our imagination and provoke us into forging even more possibilities for our national vocational education and training system, in particular, the possibility that every Australian has access to the best, most responsive, and most accessible education and training system we can provide.

**Kay Ganley, National Chair
Australian Council for
Private Education and Training**

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So many of our members go to private providers because they have more of the flexibility to actually come and deliver the way companies want it (training) delivered.

Heather Ridout, CEO Australian Industry Group, June 2010

INTRODUCTION

Private registered training organisations are increasingly the 'engine room' of the Australian training sector. They provide 74% of all vocational education and training activity nationally in Australia, with 80% of this delivered to domestic students – most on a fee for service basis. They employ over 95,000 full-time equivalent staff nationally, including trainers and assessors, administrators, and support staff. The top five industry areas of training delivery by private providers in 2009-2010 were community services, health, education; arts, entertainment, sport and recreation; tourism and hospitality; business and clerical; and building and construction.

However, the contribution of the private providers remains under-acknowledged and invisible. In this brochure, ACPET (Australian Council for Private Education and Training) aims to correct that impression by highlighting the significant achievements of our members, staff, students and trainees in the area of socially inclusive teaching and organisational practices.

Established in 1992, ACPET is the national industry association for private sector providers of post-compulsory education and training for Australian and international students. ACPET represents over 1,100 providers of school, vocational and higher education in every State and Territory and in all fields of education and training. Our members deliver some 85% of private provider training, educating close to 1.4 million full-time equivalent domestic and overseas students at institutions that range from large multi-national organisations to hundreds of small and medium businesses.

Consequently, ACPET and our private registered training organisation members are well placed to provide a significant role in Australia's national social inclusion agenda. We work hard to be effective and responsive to the very diverse needs of our students and trainees. Our private registered training providers seek to ensure their policies, products and service contribute to an inclusive tertiary education system and do not exclude or unfairly disadvantage learners or potential learners.

Some of the things that private registered training organisations do very well include their willingness to convene courses despite small class sizes; their practical ability to respond to unusual and diverse needs at any time and in any place; their talent for managing limited resources effectively; and their innovative spirit to be more flexible and responsive to students' learning needs. **In short, ACPET's members value every single individual student, and his or her determination to secure an education.**

Our members sign up to ACPET's Code of Ethics, responding to the social, cultural and educational needs of all students. In addition, there are six principles enshrined in ACPET's Statement of Social Inclusion and Diversity guide that ACPET members work towards:

An **integrated approach** creating a socially inclusive culture in which differences are recognised, understood and supported in all aspects of work, products and services.



INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

Strengthening the capacity of the tertiary education system to respond to a diversity of clients.

Supporting policies and practices that strengthen social inclusion and **challenging** those that privilege certain groups.

Flexibility, resources and support provided at the point of service delivery.

Consultation to strengthen ACPET's capacity to contribute to an inclusive tertiary education system.

Continual **evaluation** of policies and products on diversity.

ACPET is taking a leadership role in social inclusion because Australia's tertiary education system does not deliver for all people. Much work must be done to make our national education system inclusive to all groups of people, including:

Indigenous Australians – Indigenous students enrol in qualifications at Certificate IV and higher at half the rate of non-Indigenous students and withdraw from their subjects without completing them at double the rate.

Students with a disability – only 59% of students with a disability get employment following their training compared with 72% of people without a disability¹.

Regional, rural and remote students – while participation in VET generally is often strong in non-metropolitan areas, it is

much lower in Diploma level courses with a significant variation in participation and attainment across regions².

Migrant and refugee students – employment for people from culturally diverse backgrounds stand out as particularly poor and they do not readily take up apprenticeships and traineeships³.

Inadequate training and qualification attainment levels, and the resulting underemployment do not just affect individuals and their families. These four groups in our community make up large sections of the labour force. With skills shortages, businesses are demanding more skilled workers. Inclusive educational practices are essential if the economy is to thrive.

ACPET members have embraced social inclusion and diversity policies and practices. In every State, in every industry, and in every region, our private registered training provider members are doing innovative things to advance social inclusion. The results cannot be denied:

People from all walks of life who never thought they would enter tertiary education are now completing trade certificates and diplomas.

Trainers who once taught standard programs are now creatively mixing supports and resources according to individual need.

Registered training organisations which once focused solely on training delivery are now partnering with local organisations to offer a broad range of educational and support services.

Our leading private registered training organisations are pragmatic business enterprises concerned about the bottom line, but they also want to make a positive contribution to their communities. They take pride in their ability to think laterally when challenges arise, to give everyone the opportunity to learn and get a skilled job.

In this booklet, ACPET members, staff and their students share their experiences about transforming social inclusion policy into good business practice.

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We pride ourselves on providing training that has immediate practical on-farm application and is delivered by industry experts. We have small class sizes and we integrate research into training.

Bill Hamill, CEO, Rural Industry Skills Training

CASE STUDY 1 BRINGING TRAINING TO THE BUSH

Twenty-five years ago, concerned community members in the New England and North West of NSW, saw a need to address the mental health needs of rural people in these areas. They noted that trained professionals were difficult to recruit, and when they did come, they did not understand the struggles of the bush and soon left.

Miss Lois Reid was asked to train local people to provide counselling in these rural and remote communities, and she travelled between ten centres to train locals in their place for over ten years. The graduates of this training continue to provide counselling and support in their own communities.

The College of Counselling Studies has now trained over 500 people. The external study programme is combined with the provision of practical training on-site in towns such as Moree, Tamworth, Inverell and Armidale. The courses are well regarded due to the quality of the graduates.

College Principal, Jenny Regan, explains:

People living in rural and remote communities understand rural issues best. They are in the best position to assist others. Our counselling training provides personal education, builds community capacity and provides skills which increase employment opportunities for people who choose to live 'in the bush'.

She says their courses are vital for boosting the ranks of counsellors in rural areas. This has been particularly important with the recent drought and its economic and social impacts further straining resources.

Graduates of the College are providing services in schools, Aboriginal outpost centres, family support services, women's refuges and rehabilitation centres. Many graduates have initiated support services where previously there were none.



Students on farm work (Rural Industry Skills Training)

One former student says:

My counselling training has enabled me to assist the people in this outback area through so many difficult times.

Another says he has benefited personally from the training:

As a result of the course I was able to address many issues I have struggled with all my life.

¹ NCVER 2010 VET provider collection

² Lamb and Walstab 2008 Participation in VET across Australia: a regional analysis

³ Miralles-Lombardo, Miralles, Judith Miralles & Golding (2008) Creating learning spaces for refugees: The role of multicultural organisations in Australia



What we're doing in communities is working closely with the trainees to engage them personally, to foster confidence, to support positive attitudes to learning and community contribution. We are building language and literacy skills where these are needed. In the end, all involved are seeking sustainable, long-term community employment.

BCA National Managing Director, Bruce Callaghan speaking about their Business Skills Program for remote Indigenous communities

CASE STUDY 2 CARING FOR OUR ELDERS, CARING FOR OUR COUNTRY

At Booroongen Djugun College on the NSW Mid-North coast, the local Aboriginal community has a major say in what courses are run and how they are run.

The College consults a Council of Elders who advised that health and land are the two most important things for their community.

Young Aboriginal people are encouraged by the Elders to embrace this culturally-relevant learning. And it's working. Booroongen graduates with health and aged care qualifications are being snapped up for jobs in local hospitals and nursing homes. Others are graduating with conservation and land management skills and applying their knowledge to protect the region's spectacular forests, coastlines and rivers.

Booroongen thrives on innovative thinking. It pioneered the teaching approach known as circular learning. College founder, Val March explains:

It's a continual process of learning – discussing a subject in the classroom, applying it at work, then coming back to the classroom to discuss what was learnt.

She said it works much better than waiting for a block of work experience at the end of the semester. In fact, she says:

It works so well that TAFE and everyone else are now using circular learning too.

The college has won numerous awards for its relevant, holistic approach and its commitment to practical outcomes. ANU's Jerry Schwab has noted that Booroongen Djugun is remarkable in a number of ways but:

...it is particularly impressive in pushing boundaries as both an Indigenous organisation and as an educational institution...it prides itself on cutting-edge management and quality assurance standards.



Student engaged in environmental work (Booroongen Djugun College)

"It's very important to align with a respected organisation in the Indigenous community. It's about building trust. We had a mentor who came on-site every day. We had a lot of support from the Elders. And those girls aren't looking back. We've been overwhelmed by the success rate."

Janis Gordon, General Manager, The Australasian College speaking about their beauty course for young Indigenous women, run in partnership with the National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy.



At Western College they thought I could use what I've seen and what I've done in my life...I'm using my people skills and I'm learning about management and organisation.

Toby Artery, Indigenous student, early school leaver

"Tailoring our apprenticeship programs to the needs of disadvantaged students who may be long-term unemployed, have special learning needs or are disengaged from the learning process is paramount. We embed literacy and numeracy in our programs to build confidence. We also engage with local employers to ensure we understand their needs so our graduates are well suited and prepared for an apprenticeship."

Felicity Newton, Western College, Dubbo



Phil, completing a qualification in plastering with FCTA

CASE STUDY 3 BEATING THE TRADES SHORTAGE

You'd be amazed the number of people that have a mastery of the skills but can't read or write.

Lorraine Baff of Flexible Construction Training and Assessment (FCTA) says at least a third of their students have literacy problems or learning difficulties. This is not an uncommon situation in the trades.

Lorraine says many people, particularly in 35-60 age range, have been working in the industry for years but are too embarrassed to talk about their literacy problems. Their inability to read and write means that even if they are very skilled tradespeople, they can't get their trade certificate, they can't run their own business and they can't put on apprentices.

The problem really hits home when there's a trades shortage.

FCTA has earned a reputation for being able to help. They include one-on-one, innovative approaches to literacy and learning support as part of their construction training. They work around the schedules of the employer and apprentice – 49 weeks a year, on weekends and

after work – to bring the students up to speed.

Lorraine Baff sees many happy endings:

I did an RPL on a plasterer who couldn't get a qualification because he had dyslexia. He was one of the finest plasterers I've ever seen. We spent some time doing gap training, we got him his certificate. Now he's got his licence and he's trading on his own.

FCTA have won numerous accolades for their work, but the real reward is the success of their students.

One former student writes:

They respected the sensitivity of my barriers and showed me they were flexible enough to help me reach my goal of finally getting the qualifying certificate I had wanted for over two decades... I think they are the hidden secret in the building trade and other providers should take a leaf out of their book and try to be as positive and flexible as they are.

Steve Clarke, former student



85 per cent of ARA staff are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds themselves. They are able to communicate in the language of the client when needed, and they are in a unique position to understand the cultural issues and barriers experienced as clients settle into their life in Australia.

Manager, ARA Training

CASE STUDY 4 SKILLS FOR NEW BEGINNINGS

The story of Spectrum Education and Training (SET) is a story of how a small client-focussed business, which is genuinely an integral part of its community, can prosper.

SET was established in 2007 to help people from migrant and refugee backgrounds get skills to settle into Australian business and community life. In this short time, SET has provided training to over 1,000 students from 20 different cultural backgrounds. It has achieved a retention rate of 90% and 95% employment outcomes.

Spectrum Manager, Maria Langwell says:

SET has become known for its local labour market links as well as its strengths-based approach. We value diversity and appreciate what each individual brings to their training. We see our students' bilingual skills as an important asset.

SET has embraced the social inclusion agenda and is setting the standards that others aspire to. SET has won a host of awards including 2010 Victorian Small Training Provider of the Year.

Its approach includes employing bilingual staff, offering small classes, individualised training plans, mentors and a designated pastoral care and support coordinator.

SET strives for three things:

- To give something back – to be an industry leader who inspires and supports other RTOs and businesses
- To give 200% to clients through a suite of tailored training and support services
- To ensure sustainability through a solid quality management system.

This approach is working for the students. Former student, Kidst, fled Ethiopia after walking days through the desert. She says:

When I arrived in Australia, I had nothing. I was offered a course at Spectrum and have just finished the Certificate III in Aged Care... I want to work helping people, to give something back.

Rehan, a 63-year old refugee from Iraq, puts it simply: *With Spectrum I got my dignity back.*



Student engaged in aged care work (Spectrum Education & Training)

Sometimes it's just about thinking outside the square. When a group of newly arrived young people from Africa joined our Cert IV in Disability course, their lack of exposure to local work culture and colloquial language was a significant barrier. We developed a vocational preparation course co-hosted by the local RSL. Together we could give them relevant, supported work experience in a truly Australian setting.

Daryl Neilson, Director, Employ-ease Training

"We have a Students' Disability Policy which ensures the college provides a physical and social environment which complements and enhances the college experience for students with a disability on the same basis as other students...Our motto is 'unlocking potential through learning'. Our students with a disability exemplify the possibilities this involves."

Dr Henry Lee, Manager, Academic Program, Wollongong College of Australia

"One of our most successful students, Bronwyn, is visually impaired. We worked in partnership with Bronwyn to understand each other's needs and available resources and come up with a modified training program. As a result, she excelled in her studies and has now built a successful business."

David Smith, Director, NSW School of Massage



David Montgomery (MEGT)

CASE STUDY 5 A HANDS-ON APPROACH

MEGT Institute (Tasmania) has partnered with disability organisation Cosmos Inc, to give people with an intellectual disability access to qualifications and jobs in the retail industry.

MEGT had found that the usual classroom training based on textbooks does not work for people with an intellectual disability. So, in collaboration with Cosmos, they designed a new approach, combining short sessions with interactive, repetitive learning. The learning is reinforced through regular work placements to provide lots of opportunities to practice the learnt skills.

MEGT staff were given disability awareness training provided by Cosmos to prepare them for training this client group.

State Manager, Nicole Gayewski explained why they decided to adapt their delivery:

The retail sector has a great deal to offer in terms of career development but traditional teaching doesn't suit everyone... what is required for people

with an intellectual disability is a hands-on, interactive, supported approach to education.

The results have exceeded expectations. The first four students have now graduated with a Certificate II in Retail. As well as improving employment opportunities, the qualification has led to significant increases in the students' confidence and independence. Nicole says:

Even for those who may not achieve employment immediately, the increase in confidence will provide many more options than were available.

One graduate, Martin Leeson, has an extra reason to be proud. He was nominated as one of three national finalists in the 2010 MEGT Institute Student of the Year awards. He said: *My life has changed so much doing the course.*

The program is set to continue in 2011.



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I've been hired for my ability, not because someone's been paid to employ me. I have to pinch myself sometimes because at Western College, there's no judgement. I'm accepted.

Western College Trainer, Annette Ferguson

CASE STUDY 6 TRAINERS WHO KNOW THE TERRITORY

Dubbo's Western College backs up its philosophy of inclusive education by being an inclusive employer.

Trainer, Annette Ferguson, is a valued member of the College's team. Annette has a vision impairment which stops her from driving a car, seeing any fine detail and she gave up long ago on reading hard copy text. But, she says, her vision impairment has actually proved to be a bonus in teaching her computer course at Western College:

A lot of learners don't like to really read what's on their monitors, but because I can't, they have to – they have to define and explain to me what's going on with their computers, so in actual fact they're learning more effectively.

Annette is loath to blow her own trumpet, but she has seen how she inspires her students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds:

I guess they realised they weren't the only ones who had barriers. It was like they thought 'oh, so she has problems too. Well if she can do it with a vision impairment, I can too.

Western College's belief in Annette made all the difference:

I've been hired for my ability, not because someone's been paid to employ me. I have to pinch myself sometimes because at Western College, there's no judgement. I'm accepted.

Western College assists Annette by providing digital training materials, installing specialist software and assisting with transport to College. According to CEO, Ron Maxwell, this small investment is well worthwhile:

Western College has been good for Annette but she's been fantastic for Western College too. She is an inspiration to students and staff alike.



Computer class at Dubbo's Western College

PROPOSED INITIATIVES

ACPET has identified a number of priorities to deliver greater efficiency, effectiveness and equity for Australia's VET system. Those of relevance to ensuring learners receive more socially inclusive learning experience and enhance their post-study outcomes include:

1. Increased student choice to promote greater responsiveness in the education market, enabling learning to be tailored to the diverse needs of individuals.
2. Fair and equitable regulation to better preserve the desired standards for quality in learning outcomes and viability of institutions.
3. Improved quality and performance of all professional staff underpins greater quality and accountability of service provision to students.

In keeping with these principles, ACPET proposes that the Australian, State and Territory Governments give consideration to the following funding initiatives to advance socially inclusive teaching and organisational practices in the private training sector:

- Establish a pool of funds to assist private registered training organisations to convert inaccessible training premises into accessible premises, and thus provide greater choice for learners with disabilities.
- Provide project funding for registered training organisations to work in partnership with local employment organisations focused on people with a disability, indigenous people, rural and remote students, and migrants to design suitable courses and recruit students from these groups; as well as longer-term incentives to mainstream these arrangements.

- Establish a public-private sector program which provides scholarships for disadvantaged learners and offer teachers and trainers the opportunity to access mentoring opportunities.
- Subsidise and support projects by private registered training organisations to work with schools to recruit students from disadvantaged groups.
- Provide a subsidy to private registered training organisations to deliver literacy programs (to supplement existing programs), and a range of low or no-cost programs such as telephone skills and compliance training to small organisations and charities.

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