

Client & Student Voice Action Group
Disability Sub-group

CONSULTATION PAPER

A consultation with stakeholders of the National Training System on new
national Disability Client Advisory Arrangements

January 2006
Endorsed for release for public consultation

CONTENTS

CONTENTS	2
INTRODUCTION	3
MAKING A SUBMISSION	5
1. Objective of the advisory arrangement	6
2. Principles for the new advisory arrangement	6
3. Advice from ADTAC on disability reform	8
Where have we come from?	8
Where do we need to go?	8
Progressing a Whole of Life approach	8
The need for effective performance measures	8
Delivering on the ground.....	9
4. Possible advisory models – structured questions	11
Role	11
Operation	12
General	13
GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS	13
Attachment A The National Training System	14
Attachment B Some Existing National Client Advisory Arrangements	15
Attachment C - Advice to ANTA from ADTAC	18

TOWARDS NATIONAL DISABILITY CLIENT & STUDENT ADVISORY ARRANGEMENTS

CLIENT & STUDENT VOICE ACTION GROUP - DISABILITY SUB-GROUP CONSULTATIVE PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

Following the Prime Minister's announcement of the transfer of the roles and responsibilities of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) to the Department of Education, Science and Training, in effect from 1 July 2005, a new national training system has been established. The system builds on the strengths of past arrangements and is forward looking to ensure a high quality, flexible and responsive training sector delivers genuine competency based qualifications to provide the skilled people required by industry and business, now and into the future.

In February and March 2005, during consultations held to develop new directions for the national training system, stakeholders agreed that a responsive national training system must take account of the views of all students and clients. There was support for client advisory arrangements to be maintained – particularly for Indigenous students and students with a disability. There was also strong support for considering the views of all students, particularly disadvantaged students. However, there was no consensus on the form that such arrangements may take.

This paper is the first phase of a two staged consultation process for establishing a national advisory arrangement that can provide advice to the training system on better meeting the needs of clients and students with disability – a group whose participation and training employment outcomes are significantly poorer than for other groups.

This consultation paper is aimed at canvassing input from a broad range of peak bodies and other stakeholders across

- The disability sector;
- The industry sectors;
- Registered training providers and teachers;
- Employers and employment agencies;
- State and Commonwealth government bodies; and
- Individuals in, or who have an interest in, vocational and technical education.

This document is intended to guide feedback. It outlines and seeks comment and/or submissions on:

1. The objectives of the advisory arrangement,
2. Proposed principles for the new advisory arrangement, and
3. Possible advisory models

To maintain the momentum in improving training and employment outcomes for students, the Action Group is working quickly and collaboratively to put national advisory arrangements in place by June 2006.

BACKGROUND

At the 10 June 2005 Ministerial Council meeting, Ministers endorsed a proposal to immediately set up an Action Group to develop recommendations on the best arrangements to support ongoing high level advice on the needs of all learners.

The Client and Student Voice Action Group (CSVAG) has been established to undertake this work. The Action Group's Terms of Reference and membership is available at:

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/nts/action/csvag.htm

At its first meeting in November 2005, the Action Group agreed to a work plan timeline, which can also be found at the above link. New national client and student advisory arrangements are to be in place by June 2006.

The Action Group's Disability Equity Sub-group is responsible for developing an advisory arrangement for students and clients with a disability and has prepared this consultation paper.

A further two sub-groups, the Indigenous Sub-group and General Equity Sub-group, are developing specific mechanisms for their client groups.

The Disability Equity Sub-group includes diverse industry, government and client group representatives, a list of which can also be found at the link above.

At its first meeting in December 2005, the Disability Equity Sub-group agreed to develop a consultation paper to seek input on the model for a new disability client advisory arrangement. This paper is the result and will be used as the basis for consultations between January and early March 2006.

The paper to follow contains:

- An outline of the objectives and proposed principles for the advisory arrangement
- Advice provided by the former Australian Disability Training Advisory Council to the ANTA Board, and
- A series of questions on the potential scope, initiatives and operation of the new arrangement.

MAKING A SUBMISSION

Respondents are asked to reply to all or some of the questions posed in the paper. Other comments may also be included in submissions.

Closing date for submissions is COB Friday 17th February 2006.

Submissions should be provided as a Microsoft Word document or in Portable Document Format (PDF). Alternatively please type or write the response clearly in black ink on A4 paper. Submissions should not be bound and only one copy is required.

Submissions must be signed and, if from an organisation, the appropriate authorisation should be made clear. Emailed submissions should include name, phone number and postal address.

The preference is for submissions to be forwarded by email to: **mel.aerenga@det.nsw.edu.au**

Alternatively submission can be provided:

by facsimile to: **02 9244 5365**

by post to: **Attention Mel Aerenga
Department of Education and Training
Level 14, 1 Oxford Street,
Darlinghurst 2010 NSW**

Any interested parties that may not have been directly sent this consultation paper can download the consultation paper from:

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/nts/action/csvag.htm

A further two consultation papers – from the Indigenous Sub-group and the General Equity Sub-group - can also be downloaded from this site.

Forums

In late February and early March, targeted stakeholders will be invited to participate in consultation forums to further discuss, develop and refine ideas proposed in submissions. It is anticipated that a total of five forums will be held in Western Australia, Northern Territory, far-north Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia. Please indicate your interest in attending one of these forums by email to the email address. Participants will be required to fund their own attendance to the forums.

Updated information about the consultation process will be available from the website provided above.

A THOUGHT STARTER - towards a disability advisory arrangement for students and clients

This document is intended to be a 'thought starter' to guide consultations.

The paper outlines and seeks comment on:

- (1) Objectives of the advisory arrangement;
- (2) Proposed principles for the new advisory arrangement;
- (3) Advice to ANTA from the former Australian Disability Training Advisory Council; (ADTAC); and
- (4) Possible advisory models.

1. Objective of the advisory arrangement

The agreed *Framework for the New National Training System* states that mechanisms for engaging students will be built into the national training system. It proposes that client and student advisory arrangements be established to:

- Engage with students;
- Ensure the views of all students, particularly disadvantaged students, are considered in training planning and delivery; and
- Support ongoing high level advice on the needs of all learners, particularly people with a disability and Indigenous Australians, towards improved training outcomes.

2. Principles for the new advisory arrangement

The agreed principles of the new national training system are:

1. Industry and business needs both now and for the future, drive training policy, priorities and delivery;
2. Better quality training and outcomes for clients through more flexible and accelerated pathways, are assured;
3. Processes are simplified and streamlined and enhance national consistency;
4. Young people have opportunities to gain a wide range of lasting skills that provide a strong foundation for their working lives; and
5. Training opportunities are expanded in areas of current and expected skill shortage.

Taking the above principles for the training system as a base, the following proposed principles have been developed to guide thinking about the scope, activities, linkages and operation of the new disability client advisory arrangement:

1. The activities of the new advisory arrangement should be consistent with the principles of the National Training Framework.
2. The new advisory arrangement should:
 - a. Have a clearly defined scope of activity;
 - b. Adopt an evidence based approach to providing advice;
 - c. Provide advice that is action oriented and leads to tangible training and employment outcomes;

- d. Be credible with the client group through appropriate, transparent and accountable processes;
 - e. Be well connected to the national training system with the capacity to influence training planning and delivery;
 - f. Recognise and be responsive to other initiatives impacting on the national training system;
 - g. Be innovative and flexible;
 - h. Adopt a whole of life approach to disability reform advice;
 - i. Have an intellectual leadership role in disability reform.
3. Recognise that much work has been done, including by the former Australian Disability Training Advisory Council (ADTAC) and that the achievements to date will be built upon.¹

¹ For Example: *Bridging Pathways*, the national strategy for increasing opportunities for people with a disability in training, and the revised Blueprint for action.

3. Advice from ADTAC on disability reform

In considering the kind of arrangements that would most effectively provide advice and leadership on disability reform in the training system, stakeholders are asked to consider the advice put forward by the former Australian Disability Advisory Council (ADTAC).

New national training advisory arrangements will need to recognise and build on the significant work which has been achieved under *Bridging Pathways - Australia's National Disability Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 2000-2005* and the revised Blueprint for the Strategy's implementation. Both documents are available on the DEST website at http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/nts/vet/aitac.htm

Where have we come from?

Five years ago, the ANTA Board made a landmark decision to address the under-representation of people with a disability in vocational education and training. The result was a 'Blueprint for the national plan of action for increasing opportunities for people with a disability in vocational education and training' called *Bridging Pathways*.

In itself, the launch of the Blueprint was a significant achievement. It has the support of key stakeholder groups and clients and is a foundation for progress that did not previously exist. It provides a framework for consistent and coordinated action.

The Blueprint helped to establish the foundation needed for change. A substantial investment has been made and we have reached a critical point where returns will be reaped if we keep building on that foundation.

Where do we need to go?

Based on the mid-term review of the Blueprint and other developments, ADTAC believes the following issues are critical to the future of disability reform:

- ▶ *Progressing a Whole of Life approach*
- ▶ *The need for effective performance measures*
- ▶ *Delivering on the ground*
- ▶ *Engaging key players.*

Progressing a Whole of Life approach

Stakeholders have agreed that a 'Whole of Life, Whole of Government' approach to disability reform is essential. The issues challenging people with a disability cross all the boundaries within which services and initiatives are normally constructed and people's real-life needs will only be met with a co-ordinated approach between the policies, programs and services delivered for the benefit of people with a disability. There are some existing mechanisms which could be used to help this such as the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

The need for effective performance measures

Currently there is no reliable data about the number of people with a disability participating in VET, partly because of the lack of common data definition for people with a disability across schools, VET and the higher sector, and partly because of the process by which students are asked to identify their disability. There is a need to develop sophisticated measures of progress and collecting and analysing qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate activities and actions.

We need to know more: What are the restrictions of each person's disability; what measures need to be put in place to enable success for each person, given the range of needs for various

disabilities; what is the true extent to which people with disabilities are participating in VET; what are the short and long term outcomes for graduates with a disability, particularly those outside the scope of the annual student outcomes survey (the recent National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) statistical compendium on people with a disability, commissioned by ADTAC makes better use of current data but shows up gaps in what we gather).

All states and territories have already agreed to include data about people with disabilities in the following key performance measures from *Shaping Our Future*:

- The level of student participation and achievement in VET
- The level of student employment outcomes and benefits after training.

Delivering on the ground

Some of the key issues are:

- ▶ professional development of teachers and trainers
- ▶ the need to improve Training Packages
- ▶ lack of funding
- ▶ the need to improve employment outcomes
- ▶ engaging key players.

Professional development

Before we can develop a more inclusive VET system, we need staff who are better equipped to help people with a disability successfully complete their education and training. The mid-term review confirmed the need for more work in this area, starting with a coordinated professional development strategy for teachers and trainers including supporting more collaborative partnerships between RTOs and disability employment agencies with specialist knowledge and other disability support agencies in the community.

Improving training packages

There is a need to improve the Training Package model and its supporting structures to ensure that Training Packages are truly inclusive and are resourced to respond to the needs of people with disability.

Funding

Funding is a critical issue for furthering disability reforms. Smarter use could be made of existing funding and there could be better coordination between funding sources. For example, there may be funds available as part of the *Reframing the Future* initiative which could be earmarked for professional development on disability issues.

There is also scope to develop more equitable purchasing arrangements that account for the true cost of supporting people with a disability through training and into employment. For example it's not sufficient to make Cert 1 & 2 traineeships available, the system must consider the funds needed to support students with disabilities into and through a training program and into employment.

Improving employment outcomes

Data shows that employment outcomes for VET learners with a disability are significantly lower than for all VET graduates. We need to investigate the barriers to improved outcomes and how they might be removed. Some areas to focus on are:

- Assisting business to better understand the sound business reasons for employing people with disability
- Reaching employers already employing people with disabilities to get them to share their stories

- Ensuring that employers will receive support as and when they need it.

Engaging key players

More engagement of key players is needed both within the VET sector and in the broader community. ADTAC believes one mechanism for engaging key players is through “Champions of Disability”—from local advocates already involved and passionate about improving outcomes for people with a disability, to high-profile Australians, not formally associated with disability, to act as spokespeople and to influence government, industry, community members and businesses.

These champions would be from a variety of backgrounds with influence across a range of areas, for example, a media champion who influences public opinion and a champion with a distinguished career in government who liaises with and influences various government bodies.

More engagement with industry players is critical to improving employment outcomes for people with a disability. Need to investigate ways to involve more industry representatives in disability reform.

At the Government level, disability issues need to become embedded in the consideration of other relevant matters. For example, improving outcomes for people with a disability should feature in national VET strategies, action plans and accountability measures and must be on the agenda of new industry advisory arrangements.

4. Possible advisory models – structured questions

To build on the objectives and proposed principles for the national advisory arrangements outlined above, a series of structured questions have been developed to assist stakeholders in considering ideas about a model for the new national disability client advisory arrangement that will provide an effective voice for students and clients with disability in the national training system.

The questions are not intended to be exhaustive but aim to stimulate discussion and debate.

The advice paper provided to ANTA on developing a framework for disability advisory arrangements *Framework for National Advisory Arrangements to Improve the Australian VET System's Responsiveness to Clients with a Disability* is included at Attachment A for stakeholder consideration. In addition, summaries of some existing advisory models in education, training and related sectors are included at Attachment B.

Role

What should be the key roles of a national disability client advisory arrangement for people with disability to meet the objectives outlined at section 1?

1. Are the proposed principles (set out above at section 2, page 3) for the advisory arrangement appropriate?
2. Who should the advisory arrangement engage (eg students, community, advocacy groups, teachers, employers, industry, researchers?)
3. Who should the advisory arrangement provide advice to?
4. How might the work of the advisory arrangement progress the current disability training strategy, *Bridging Pathways*²?
 - 4a What capacity should the advisory arrangement have to enable the monitoring and evaluation of activity initiated through the Blueprint?
5. How could an advisory arrangement provide intellectual and strategic leadership on disability reform to the system?

² Bridging Pathways Strategy and revised Blueprint can be viewed and downloaded at:
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/nts/vet/adtac.htm

Scope of Activity

What activities should the advisory arrangement undertake to meet its functions and roles?
How could activities be prioritised?

6. How will the scope of the advisory arrangements address a specific focus on training outcomes for people with disability within the context of the broader Australian Government reform agenda, impacting on clients with disability, within which the national training system operates?
7. How will the scope of the advisory arrangements combine a specific focus on training outcomes while also ensuring a 'whole of life' focus on the needs of students with a disability (including physical access, transport, personal care, attitudinal change, effective transitions and sustainable employment outcomes)?
8. How could the advisory arrangement most effectively ensure that its work contributes to tangible outcomes in the training system?
 - 8a What other emerging issues may the advisory arrangements need to take into account?
 - 8b How can we ensure the arrangements are flexible enough to address emerging issues?

Operation

What will the advisory arrangement look like? How would the advisory arrangements work?

9. What are some key ways that a disability advisory arrangement could engage and consult with students/learners (and their representative groups) and other clients (for example industry, community, parents, researchers etc)
11. How will the mechanism ensure it balances engagement with a broad cross-section of stakeholders and the provision of effective leadership and focussed advice?
12. How could the advisory arrangement link with and complement other Government initiatives and forums impacting on people with a disability?
 - 12a What links should be made to other advisory bodies or organisations?
 - 12b What is the best way for the arrangements to relate to work that already takes place in the training system for clients and students with disability?
 - 12c How might state and territory level advisory mechanisms link with and inform the national advisory arrangements?

► _____
³ For example:

Welfare to Work reforms;
Employer Demand Strategy (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR));
Employers Roundtable for People with Disabilities;
Disability Advisory Group (DisAG); and
National Inquiry into Employment and Disability.

- 13 Who should be involved in the advisory arrangements once they have been established?
 - 13a How should membership of the advisory arrangement be determined?
 - 13b How will gender parity be encouraged?
 - 13c Who should lead the advisory mechanism (eg someone from the disability sector, from industry or a combination?)
 - 13d How can we ensure that both women's and men's voices are heard as part of the advisory arrangements?

- 14 What kind of support structure would an advisory arrangement require to undertake its work?
 - 14a Should accountability and reporting for the advisory arrangements be independent? Could a government department undertake this role?

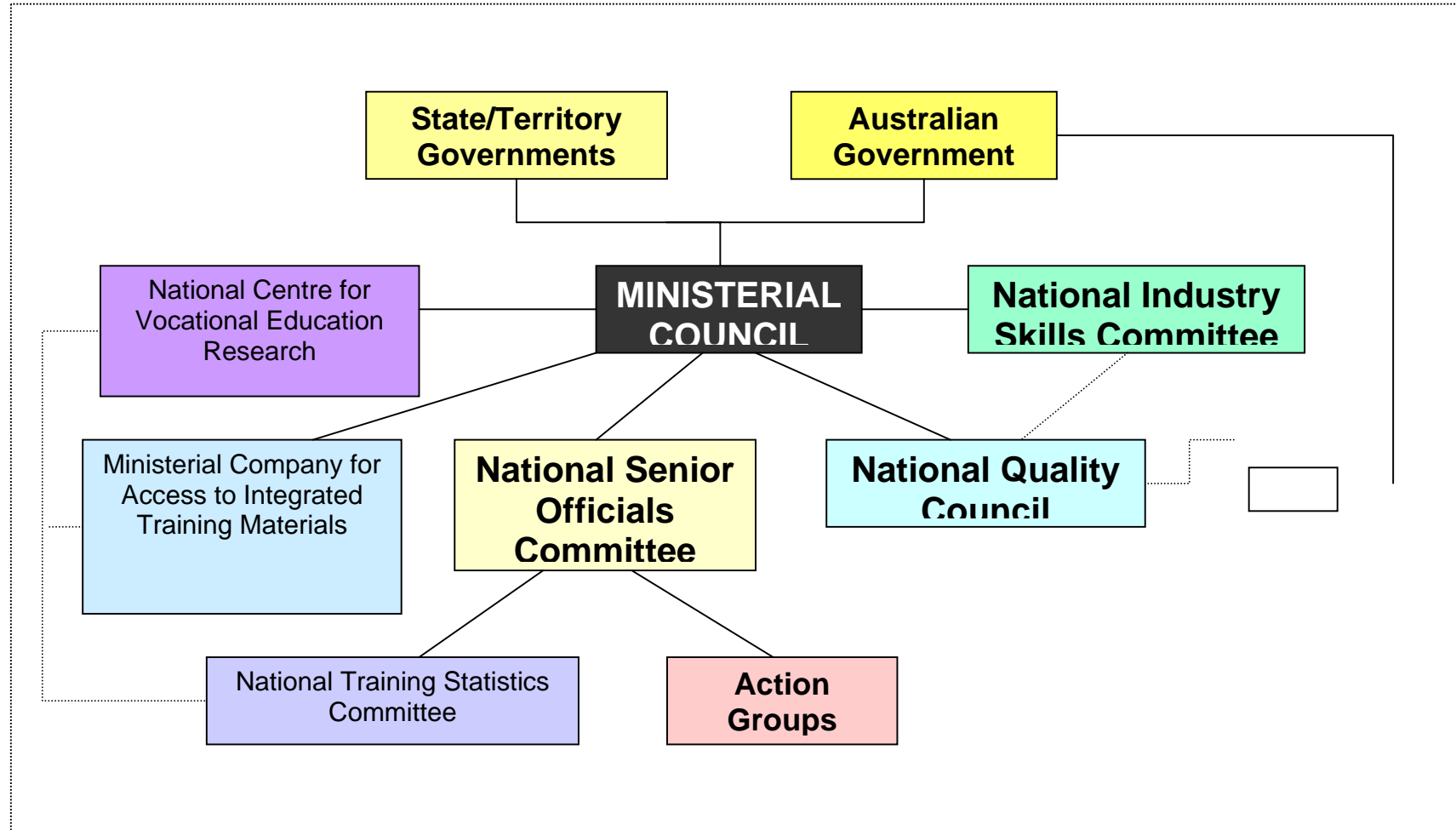
General

- 15 What lessons can be learned from past and current advisory mechanisms for clients with disability in the training, education and any related sectors?
 - 15a What has worked and why?
 - 15b What has not worked and what improvements are suggested?

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ADTAC	Australian Disability Training Advisory Council
CSVAG	Client and Student Voice Action Group
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
ISCs	Industry Skills Councils
MCVTE	Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education
NISC	National industry Skills Committee
NSOC	National Senior Officials Committee
NQC	National Quality Council
RTOs	Registered Training Organisations

The National Training System



Attachment B

Some Existing National Client Advisory Arrangements

NATIONAL YOUTH CAREERS AND TRANSITIONS ADVISORY GROUP (NYCTAG)

Purpose

- The Minister has the opportunity to hear from a broad cross section of stakeholders, who provide independent advice on the transition of young people from school to further education, training and employment and champion the national agenda for young Australians.

Activities

- Development of advice on strategic issues including:
 - matters affecting young peoples' successful transitions to learning and education,
 - identified priority issues regarding enterprise, vocational and career education, and
 - identifying opportunities to establish links between transition programmes and other initiatives, including developing effective local partnerships and strategic alliances between government, business and community.

Membership

- 16 high profile members represent a broad cross section of society and have the ability to offer fresh perspectives.
 - The Group Chair is Ian Spicer (National Disability Advisory Council).
 - Members are drawn from students, principals, Indigenous Australians, the National Training Quality Council, health specialists, journalists, and industry etc.
- Members are appointed by the Minister, generally for a two year term.
- Members are paid sitting fees and allowances.
- Observers may attend meetings subject to the approval of the Chair.

Operational and Administrative Arrangements

- The Chair and Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) determine the frequency and dates of meetings.
- The Group reports directly to the Minister.
- The Chair may establish working groups - a convenor for each group is chosen from the members.
- DEST manages the Secretariat which:
 - provides support to Chair, Deputy Chair/s and Members,
 - manages the work plan and business between meetings,
 - develops, prepares and distributes agenda papers for each meeting,
 - arranges travel, accommodation, venue and catering for meetings, and
 - makes payments of fees and allowances.

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/career_development/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/nyctag/default.htm

INDIGENOUS HIGHER EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL (IHEAC)

Purpose

- A formal arrangement for the Australian Government to receive Indigenous advice on higher education issues.

Activities

- Provides policy advice to the Minister for Education, Science and Training aimed at producing successful outcomes for Indigenous students and staff in relation to their participation, progression, and retention in both study and employment in higher education.

- Develops strategies.
- Promotes best practice.
- Monitors student academic outcomes and staff participation.
- Makes recommendations regarding awards.
- Convenes an annual conference.

Membership

- There are 16 members (including professors, directors and deans of higher education institutions throughout Australia, as well as presidents of student bodies and a student).
- All members are appointed by the Minister (as individuals who do not represent organisations).
- Members are paid sitting fees and allowances.

Operational and Administrative Arrangements

- Terms of Reference were established through a roundtable discussion with key Indigenous higher education stakeholders.
- The Chair, with member agreement, may establish working groups, the convenor of which is chosen from members.
- The Council determines meeting frequency (approximately three meetings each year and an annual conference).
- DEST runs the Secretariat.

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/indigenous_education/programmes_funding/programme_categories/support_for_education_providers_staff/indigenous_higher_education_advisory_council.htm

NEW APPRENTICESHIPS ROUNDTABLE

Purpose

- New Apprentices have the opportunity to present their ideas to Australian Government as the national voice of New Apprentices.

Activities

- In 2005 roundtable participants undertook 5 projects and made recommendations on:
 - financial and other incentives for people to start a New Apprenticeship and for employers to employ New Apprentices;
 - effective information about New Apprenticeships for Careers Advisors;
 - standardising the quality of off-the-job training from Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) – with particular focus on motor mechanic and agriculture training;
 - duration of New Apprenticeships; and
 - promotion and marketing of New Apprenticeships - including improving the perception and benefits of New Apprenticeships.
- A discussion paper detailing the recommendations and findings from all five projects is currently being prepared by DEST.

Membership

- The New Apprentices Roundtable consists of 18 current and recently completed New Apprentices from all over Australia and from industries or occupations where skills needs have been identified, particularly in the traditional trades.
- Members were identified by New Apprenticeships Centres, RTOs and industry organisations.
- Both Ministers and industry representatives attended the Roundtable.

Operational and Administrative Arrangements

- DEST organises the roundtable and engages a facilitator for the event.
- New Apprentices attend a workshop where they have the opportunity to get to know each other, hear about how policy is developed and develop skills (eg presentation skills). At this workshop, they discuss training issues, which are distilled into a list of projects. New Apprenticeships Roundtable members then form teams to undertake this project work, which could include undertaking consultations, surveys, research and monitoring. They present their findings and make recommendations at the Roundtable to Ministers. DEST then develops a discussion paper on how to progress these recommendations.

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/trainingtalk/issue_19/default.htm#New_Apprenticeships_Roundtable_-_November_2005

NATIONAL DISABILITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (NDAC)

Purpose

- To provide expert advice to the Minister for Family and Community Services on disability issues and encourage consultation between the Australian Government and people with disabilities, and those who care for or support them, service providers and all other levels of government.

Activities

- Promotes Australian Government leadership through policy development, longer-term planning, promotion of applied research and fostering positive ideas for change and facilitating their implementation.
- Monitors and critically evaluates Australian Government initiatives; provides advice, identifies and develops strategies, and promotes best practise.
- Provides informed advice by consulting with groups and individuals in the development of its advice to the Australian Government. (i.e. consumer focused advice on matters referred by the Minister).
- Activities to improve public awareness and attitudes.
- At the Minister's request, participates individually on special working groups, or conducts consultations, on matters relevant to the portfolio.
- The Council holds community consultation forums to get first hand information on the needs of people with a disability in a variety of settings. People attending these forums include people with disabilities, their families and carers, as well as disability service providers and government officials.

Membership

- The Council has 15 members from diverse backgrounds, including people with personal experience of disability, family members and/or carers and service providers.
- Members are appointed by the Minister.
- Every two years half the Council's membership is changed.

Operational and Administrative Arrangements

- The Council holds four meetings annually.
- The Council works through various Working Groups covering a wide range of complex policy issues in the disability and carer arenas.

<http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/disabilities/representation-ndac.htm#whatdoes>

Attachment C - Advice to ANTA from ADTAC

Framework for National Advisory Arrangements to Improve the Australian VET System's Responsiveness to Clients with a Disability

The purpose of this paper is to:

- outline the benefits to the VET system of having national advisory arrangements for clients with a disability
- develop the framework for a high-level, short-term action group to look at national advisory arrangements for VET clients with a disability, based on the priorities outlined in *Bridging Pathways*' revised Blueprint for implementation
- provide the background to the VET system's national strategy for people with a disability, a strategy which has been endorsed by all VET Ministers.

1. Why have national advisory arrangements for clients with a disability?

Pages 14 and 15 of the *Skilling Australia* paper provide a well thought-out case for continuing the *Bridging Pathways* agenda, and driving its implementation through more specific performance measures that are connected to agreed priorities in multilateral and bilateral agreements.

The mid-term review of *Bridging Pathways* – the VET system's national strategy for increasing opportunities for people with a disability in VET - found that significant progress had been made over the last few years, resulting in better awareness of disability issues, many local projects and initiatives, more collaboration, and use by states and territories of the *Bridging Pathways* framework to help set priorities⁴. It is important that this momentum is continued, particularly throughout a systemic restructure of this magnitude.

The number of VET clients reporting a disability has increased from 53,475 in 1998 to 91,439 in 2003 i.e. a proportional increase from 3.5% to 5.3%⁵. However we cannot afford to be complacent. Only 50% of VET graduates with a disability are employed after training, compared with 74% of all VET students⁶. This apparent disconnect between training and subsequent employment indicates that a concerted effort across jurisdictions is still needed, supported and driven by client advisory arrangements at the state and territory level, as well as at the national level.

Other practical reasons for having formal national advisory arrangements for VET clients with a disability include:

- retaining and expanding the wealth of information and experience that has been collected and developed over the last decade, and
- using the networks inherent in a national advisory arrangement as an important mechanism to identify emerging issues, gather examples of leading practice, and disseminate information.

2. What is the most effective way to develop a framework for national advisory arrangements?

This section outlines the possible purpose and operation of a high-level, short-term action group to look at specific structures and issues to improve the VET system's responsiveness to VET clients with a disability. The recommendations are based on the model outlined on page 11 of *Skilling Australia*.



⁴ *Bridging Pathways: Revised Blueprint* (ANTA, 2004, p 5)

⁵ *People with a disability in VET: a statistical compendium 2003* (NCVER, draft final report 22 Dec 2004, p 8)

⁶ *ibid* (p 8)

Purpose of Action Group

This group would undertake four distinct but related roles:

- creating the framework for a national advisory body focused on strategic issues for VET clients with a disability, a body which is empowered to lead and drive the *Bridging Pathways* agenda
- providing advice on performance measures which will be used in multilateral and bilateral agreements to support the *Bridging Pathways* agenda
- advising on the development of a strategic research framework to support the *Bridging Pathways* agenda
- overseeing the planned evaluation of the *Bridging Pathways* Blueprint.

Composition

ADTAC recommends the formation of a small group of senior officials from the following organisations or sectors:

- DEST
- a large state
- a small state
- a peak industry body
- a peak disability organisation - Craig Harrison
- the disability sector - Mark Bagshaw

ADTAC strongly recommends that at least two of the council's current members be included on the group for knowledge management purposes, as well as for their extensive experience and networks within the disability sector. It is also critical that the membership of the group includes at least one person with personal experience of disability.

Chairing

The group would nominate the Chair.

Line of reporting

The work of the Action Group would be presented to the National Senior Officials Committee for endorsement by Ministers.

Secretariat

The work of this group could be supported by a secretariat located within DEST.

Timeframe

This group would ideally be convened in July, to report through the National Senior Officials Committee in October and to the Ministerial Council on Vocational Education in November 2005.

3...How was the VET system's national strategy for people with a disability developed?

Development

Soon after forming in 1992, the board of ANTA formed an advisory committee - the ANTA Disability Forum - to provide advice on issues of relevance to people with a disability in the VET system.

Forum members were, in the main, representatives from disability consumer groups, who did an excellent job in producing two complementary documents:

- *Bridging Pathways – A national strategy for increasing opportunities for people with a disability in vocational education and training from 2000 until 2005*

- *Bridging Pathways – A blueprint for the national plan of action for increasing opportunities for people with a disability in vocational education and training from 2000 until 2005*

These documents were endorsed by all Australian, state and territory Ministers for vocational education and training in 2000, at which time the forum was disbanded.

Implementation

Another group, the Australian Disability Training Advisory Council (ADTAC) was formed to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Blueprint, and provide advice on emerging issues and key challenges affecting people with a disability in VET.

ADTAC was structured as a committee of the ANTA Board, and had a co-chairing arrangement with one co-chair being from the disability sector and the other from the ANTA Board.

The composition of this group was very different, focusing on those organisations most closely involved in implementing significant policy commitments e.g. each State and Territory Training Authority, three Australian government departments and ANTA, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, TAFEs and private training providers, and four disability sector representatives.

In 2003, a mid-term review of the implementation of the Blueprint found that there was a stronger awareness of disability issues, many local initiatives had sprung up, governments had used the Blueprint to help plan their priorities, and more organisations were collaborating on disability issues and projects. However, it also found that the VET system was still in the early stages of implementing many of the strategies, and that much still needed to be done.

Revision

In 2004, ADTAC revised the VET system's Blueprint to improve outcomes for people with a disability by taking into account changes such as the Disability Discrimination Amendment Education Standards, by anchoring it firmly to Shaping our Future, the national strategy for the VET system to 2010, and by highlighting five priority areas on which to focus:

1. implementing a whole-of-life approach to disability reform
2. measuring what we are achieving
3. delivering on the ground
4. engaging key players
5. improving employment outcomes.

All Ministers for vocational education and training endorsed the revised Blueprint.

Restructure

In October, the Prime Minister announced that ANTA would be abolished on 30 June 2005 and its functions transferred to DEST. As ADTAC would also cease to exist on that date, members developed a list of ten principles, *Principles of an Australian VET System that is Responsive to Clients with a Disability*, to ensure that the momentum of *Bridging Pathways* continues, particularly during so much systemic change.

In late February, DEST released *Skilling Australia*, a paper which outlined possible models for the VET system from 1 July, and was mainly focused on structural changes to help achieve three 'guiding principles' for the VET system:

- business and industry leadership
- better quality training and outcomes for clients
- streamlined and simplified processes.

Consultation

In early March, ADTAC met to discuss its response to the *Skilling Australia* report, and identified the following aspects as being critical for a responsive VET system:

- a strong central voice for VET clients with a disability – this will sharpen focus, increase momentum, improve supports, increase knowledge and improve connections

- a stronger focus on transition i.e. earlier 'front end' intervention
- a whole-of-government approach to more closely connect VET to school and higher education, and to employment, but where a healthy balance is maintained between training and employment
- a commitment to the set of principles developed by ADTAC.

Later that day, DEST consulted with ADTAC members on issues around the client voice in general, and whether the proposed model would be effective in ensuring that the voice of VET clients with a disability is heard.

Outcomes

The main outcomes from that discussion included:

- **Driving forward with *Bridging Pathways***
The *Bridging Pathways* revised Blueprint has recently been endorsed by all Ministers and should be used as the driving agenda.
- **Adding value with a small strategic national group**
There is definite value to be added by a small but strategic and long-term central group focused on improving outcomes for people with a disability in VET. This should be an active and high-powered group empowered to lead and drive change through re-engaging state CEOs, and should not be assigned a passive monitoring role. The focus should be on 'thought leadership' and intellectual work around national system design.
- **Thinking carefully about composition**
The disability sector is not a single client voice, and people with a disability are not an homogenous group; it is a diverse and fragmented group of people and service providers. Structuring a 'national voice' needs to be carefully handled for credibility and needs to include other stakeholders such as industry and governments, as well as input from education and training providers for maximum buy-in.
- **Forming an interim working group to handle the re-design**
It would be counter-productive to attempt to re-design a national advisory group within a matter of weeks when ADTAC is already trying to complete projects and previous commitments within a much shorter time frame. The council also needs to wind-up most activities by the end of May, ready to hand over to DEST.

ADTAC agreed to develop the framework for a small interim action group to look at structuring a national advisory body which would drive the implementation of the *Bridging Pathways* Blueprint, oversight the evaluation of the implementation, provide advice on performance measures for multilateral and bilateral agreements, and advise on the development of a strategic research framework to support the *Bridging Pathways* agenda.

Principles of an Australian VET System that is Responsive to Clients with a Disability

All Ministers for VET have agreed to the priorities outlined in the revised Blueprint for *Bridging Pathways*, the national strategy for increasing opportunities for people with a disability in vocational education and training (VET).

1. **Bridging Pathways:** Agreed priorities in *Bridging Pathways* will be built on and extended to form the basis of future national and state/territory priorities.
2. **Inclusion:** The Australian VET system will be inclusive of people with a disability who are able to work, and their participation will become increasingly important as Australia's population ages.
3. **Outcomes:** The Australian VET system will deliver training to people with a disability, leading to outcomes equitable with those for all VET clients.
4. **Pathways:** Clients with a disability will have seamless pathways between education, training and employment, based on a whole-of-life approach to disability issues.
5. **Quality:** The VET quality assurance system will address equity issues for registered training organisations, including equipping staff with the skills needed to support clients with a disability in VET.
6. **Promotion:** The benefits of VET will be promoted to people with a disability, and the value of VET graduates with a disability will be promoted to employers and industry.
7. **Funding:** Funding and purchasing arrangements for the VET system will help achieve equitable training and employment outcomes for clients with a disability.
8. **Monitoring:** The VET system will continuously improve its performance for clients with a disability through monitoring agreed performance measures, and responding promptly to any decline in performance.
9. **Input:** People with a disability, and organisations working closely with them, will influence the planning, policy and delivery of the VET system's services and products through advisory arrangements at the national, state/territory and local levels. This will include input to the key bodies which shape Australia's VET system by determining multilateral and bilateral priorities, strategies and funding.
10. **Information:** Advisory arrangements relating to clients with a disability in the VET system will include processes to identify emerging issues and collect feedback, as well as to share information and examples of good practice.