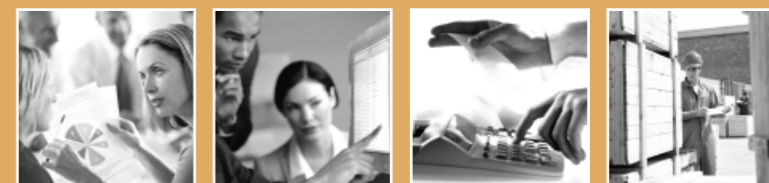




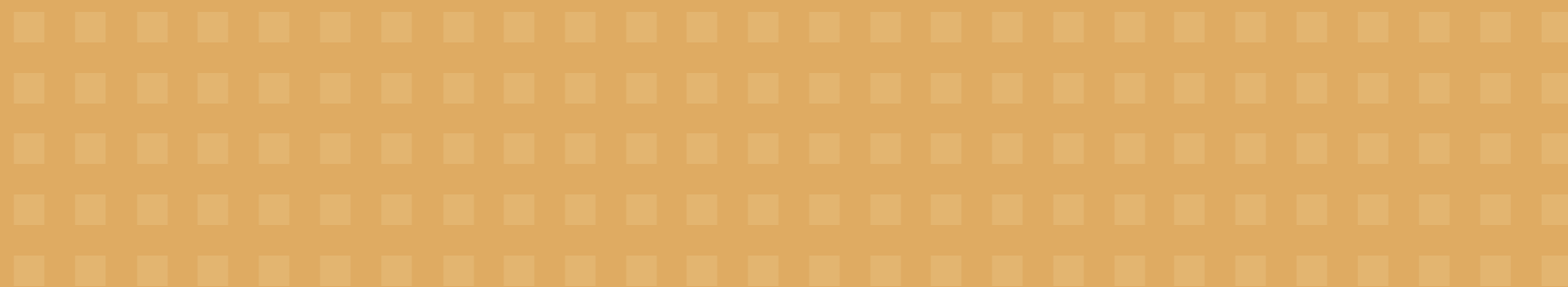
Australian Government
Department of Education,
Science and Training


Review of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research LTD Research & Statistical Services

Issues Paper



FEBRUARY 2006





Review of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research LTD Research & Statistical Services

A review of NCVER's research and statistical services contracts funded under the Strategic National Initiatives element
of the Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce

Issues Paper

FEBRUARY 2006

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Introduction

This paper is designed to provide a framework for stakeholders of the national vocational and technical education system and clients of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research's (NCVER) research and statistical services to provide input to the review.

The vocational and technical education system is a key driver of Australia's economic and social growth. For more than a decade, Australian and State and Territory Governments have worked to develop a national vocational and technical education system that now provides the basis for high quality, industry developed and nationally recognised training to about one in eight working-age Australians. Through a national network of over 4,000 public and private training providers, about 1.6 million Australians from all ages, backgrounds and locations participate in vocational and technical education each year to support their life goals.

The provision of high quality vocational and technical education research and the collection and analysis of national vocational and technical education statistics and survey data have been integral components of the development of the national vocational and technical education system. The NCVER has undertaken this programme of work on behalf of the national vocational and technical education system since 1997.

The national vocational and technical education system is evolving. Since July 2005 a new Ministerial Council, new legislation, new multilateral and bilateral agreements, and new consultative bodies providing industry leadership have been introduced to guide the strategic direction and ongoing operation of training in Australia. The NCVER, now in its twenty-fifth year, receives significant funding from governments, especially under the Strategic National Initiatives (SNI) element of the Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce. Given that funding to NCVER represents a significant proportion of SNI funds it is timely that vocational and technical education Ministers assess whether the range of services delivered by the NCVER, and the call on SNI funding, accord with the needs of the national vocational and technical education system.

The continued long term viability of the national vocational and technical education system, and therefore Australia's future, depends on the collective effort by the Australian Government, State and Territory governments, industry and the community in ensuring high quality research in vocational and technical education and the collection and dissemination of high quality and accurate statistics.

The Review

The Hon Gary Hardgrave MP, Minister for Vocational and Technical Education, has initiated a review of the two key services contracts for research and statistical services with the NCVER.

The NCVER has managed a competitive research programme and the collection of vocational and technical education statistics since 1997. The NCVER's establishment and work has supported the position that policy and practice should be informed by a sound base of high-quality information.

The review will examine and report on the effectiveness and efficiency of vocational and technical education research and statistics services provided by the NCVER to shareholders, stakeholders and clients of the national vocational and technical education system.

The Australian Government has contracted external expertise for the review. Dr Neil Johnston AO will conduct the review. A Review Committee has been formed to support the work of the external consultant and to provide input to the review. The committee is chaired by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) with membership from state and territory governments, industry and other clients of the NCVER's services. A list of committee members is provided at Appendix A. A short-term expert reference group will be established to provide advice on technical issues, especially concerning benchmarking of statistical and research services.

In accord with the Terms of Reference, the Review will consider:

- 1) the range of services provided in the statistics and research contracts and their alignment with the priorities and needs of shareholders, stakeholders and clients of the national vocational and technical education system, taking into account similar work conducted by other agencies in the system;
- 2) value for money for research and statistics services provided by NCVER benchmarked against other agencies with comparable functions and responsibilities;
- 3) the impact of the research and statistics work completed by NCVER, especially its utility for government shareholders, stakeholders and clients of the national vocational and technical education system, taking into account levels of satisfaction with NCVER services; and
- 4) mechanisms for responding to shareholder and stakeholder priorities for statistics and research services in the set-up and during the life of the contracts, with particular reference to the role of the NCVER Board and the National Training Statistics Committee.

The full terms of reference are provided at Appendix B.



The Review Process

Issues paper

This issues paper sets out a series of questions which seek to focus stakeholders' and clients' thinking on the main issues that need to be addressed for the successful delivery of research and statistical services to the national vocational and technical education system. It is intended to stimulate thinking about the issues relevant to the effective and efficient delivery of the requirements for research and statistics for the national vocational and technical education system under the research and statistics contracts.

These issues include: the range and nature of research and statistical services necessary for the continued development of the national vocational and technical education system; ensuring value for money for research and statistics services provided by NCVER; measuring and maximising the impact of NCVER services; and ensuring the responsiveness of the NCVER's research and statistical services to the changing priorities of the national vocational and technical education system.

Deadline for comments

Comments are invited on the issues outlined in this paper through written submissions to the external consultant. In addition, a series of national consultation meetings will be held with key stakeholders and clients of the NCVER.

Responses to the issues paper are requested as soon as possible but by no later than **Tuesday, 28 February 2006**.

Making a submission

The issues paper raises a series of questions for consideration by respondents. Respondents are asked to reply to all or some of the questions posed in the paper. Other comments may also be included in submissions.

Submissions should be provided as a Microsoft Word document or in Portable Document Format (PDF). Otherwise 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.

How to submit

The preference is for submissions to be forwarded by email to:

vteresearchfeedback@dest.gov.au

Alternatively, submissions can be provided:

by facsimile to:

(02) 6123 5612

by post to:

NCVER Review of Research and Statistical Services Contracts

Strategic Directions Section

LC : 202

Department of Education, Science and Training

GPO Box 9880

Canberra ACT 2601

For enquiries, please call:

(02) 6240 7513 or (02) 6240 8235

Consultation

The consultant will visit each State and Territory capital city (except the Northern Territory which will be included via teleconference) in order to provide an opportunity for interested parties to discuss issues of importance.

A schedule of consultation locations and details of how to make an appointment are available at the Review website:

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/reviews/ncver_review.htm

Review time frame

The consultant will produce a report for the Hon Gary Hardgrave MP, Minister for Vocational and Technical Education by, 31 March 2006.

The Minister will ask the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education to consider any recommendations arising from the report at its June 2006 meeting.

Background

National Centre for Vocational Education Research

The NCVER is a not-for-profit company owned by the state, territory and federal ministers responsible for vocational and technical education.

In this capacity, the NCVER:

- collects and analyses national vocational and technical education statistics and survey data, including providing an independent audit of enrolment records;
- undertakes a strategic programme of vocational and technical education research and development that includes both the undertaking of research as well as the management of a competitive research programme on behalf of the national vocational and technical education system;
- communicates the outcomes of its research and data analysis to policy-makers and practitioners;
- collects and makes available vocational and technical education research findings from Australian and international sources through the Vocational Education and Training Research Database (VOCED) database;
- undertakes commercial consultancies; and
- builds links with similar international organisations to foster comparative analysis and collaborate on issues of mutual interest.

A board of eight directors consisting of an independent chair, the chair's nominee, the managing director and directors representing state, territory and federal governments, industry and unions oversee NCVER's operation. A list of current board members is at Appendix C.

NCVER states that it:

- aims to be Australia's leading provider of quality, independent information about vocational and technical education;
- has a vision for vocational and technical education policy and practice to be informed by a sound base of high-quality information; and
- is responsible for collecting and managing national vocational and technical education and New Apprenticeship statistics, and managing national surveys of TAFE graduates and students, and employers' views of training.

The NCVER undertakes its own research as well as managing the competitive research programme on behalf of the national vocational and technical education system. It collects and provides vocational and technical education research findings from Australian and international sources through the VOCED research database.

The NCVER communicates this information to the state, territory and federal governments, industry, the vocational and technical education sector and the community.

The NCVER also undertakes consultancy work specialising in industry skills studies, conducting programme evaluations, and undertaking statistical analyses of various aspects of vocational and technical education.

The NCVER Strategic Plan and Annual Report are available at:

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/aboutncver/what.html>.

The National Vocational and Technical Education System

In 1992, Australia had eight separate training systems operating quite independently of each other, with the content and delivery of training largely determined by training providers. Employers operating across more than one State could not be confident that the quality of their employees' qualifications was consistent, nor that they had the competencies industry felt they needed to undertake their work.

Today the foundations of a truly national industry led system are in place with, for instance, Training Packages covering most industries and more than 80 per cent of the workforce. Nationally recognised qualifications are offered by over 4,000 Registered Training Organisations, both public and private, all of which are registered in accordance with the Australian Quality Training Framework.

In October 2004, the Prime Minister announced that from 1 July 2005, the responsibilities and functions of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) would be transferred to DEST and a new Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education would be formed to lead the national vocational and technical education system.

On 1 July 2005 DEST took on expanded responsibilities in the operation of the national vocational and technical education system following an extensive knowledge transfer process. To view the Department's new organisational structure for vocational and technical education, please go to:

<http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/70FDD30D-C902-4510-965C-864B3BCE36C9/7624/phoneliststructureexternal2.pdf>

Legislation to support the new system was passed by Parliament and received Royal Assent in August 2005 (*Skilling Australia's Workforce Act 2005*). The Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce, the multilateral funding agreement between the Australian Government and the States and Territories that underpins the national vocational and technical education system arrangements, was in place in October 2005. In this context the Australian and State and Territory governments agreed to new vocational and technical education arrangements to guide the priorities and planning of the national vocational and technical education system. Documents outlining these arrangements are available at:

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/publications_resources/agreement/default.htm

The Australian Government's goal is to ensure that in the future Australia's vocational and technical education system will be even more responsive to the ever-changing needs of industry. The system will continue to build its reputation in broadening post-compulsory schooling options available to young Australians. It will provide a basis for mature aged Australians to return to study and provide them with specialised skills and pathways to new careers.

Guiding principles

The Guiding Principles for the national vocational and technical education system are:

- industry and business needs, both now and for the future, drive training policies, priorities and delivery;
- better quality training and outcomes for clients, through more flexible and accelerated pathways, are assured;

- processes are simplified and streamlined and enhance national consistency;
- young people have opportunities to gain a wide range of lasting skills that provide a strong foundation for their working lives; and
- training opportunities are expanded in areas of current and expected skill shortage.

The detail underpinning the guiding principles is included in the Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce.

Strategic National Initiatives

The NCVER receives core funding from shareholder governments with 50 per cent funding from the Australian Government and the remainder provided by other jurisdictions in accordance with their population share. The NCVER's main revenue source is for services contracts covering statistical services and research work on behalf of the national vocational and technical education system. These services are funded under the Strategic National Initiatives component of Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce.

Strategic National Initiatives are projects, programmes or other initiatives relating to vocational and technical education that are principally covered in *Skilling Australia's Workforce Act 2005* Part 3, Sections 27-31. Strategic National Initiatives funds are allocated to projects and ongoing work that support the operation of the national vocational and technical education system.

The Strategic National Initiatives component of the funding agreement has an allocated pool of funding of \$25.45 million for 2006. Allocation to particular projects and programmes for 2006 is yet to be finalised.

The National Research and Evaluation Contract

The consultation paper *Skilling Australia* (February 2005) found at http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/programmes_funding/programme_categories/key_skills_priorities/skilling_australia_new_directions_for_vocational_education.htm made clear the critical importance of research and evaluation to policy development and improved practice. National research and analysis is essential to informing policy development, assisting and improving planning and evaluating performance across the vocational and technical education system. Research and analysis have a key role to play in all aspects of training.

The objectives of the programme of work conducted under the National Research and Evaluation Contract are to:

- manage the national programme of vocational and technical education research and evaluation;
- disseminate accurate, regular information about findings resulting from the national programme of vocational and technical education research and the systematic reviews to the range of stakeholders who would benefit from the findings, including State and Territory Training Authorities, training providers, government agencies, and employers; and
- provide a clearing house function to the vocational and technical education community in Australia and internationally.

Under the contract, and consistent with the national strategic directions for vocational and technical education research and evaluation, the NCVER provides the following services:


- 1) the provision of a research management function that includes:
 - identifying and monitoring progress of research themes and priorities each year that support the National Vocation Education and Training Strategy 2004-2010;
 - managing a research open grants programme. This includes management of two research consortia to undertake longer term programmes of research and implementing the National Research Strategy for 2003-2006: Indigenous Australians in Vocational Education and Training;
 - conducting and maintaining systematic reviews of research within the formal framework and infrastructure developed by the NCVER;
 - increasing the quality and relevance of vocational and technical education research through implementing a plan for quality assurance of the programme including the use of peer review and guidelines for report preparation; and
 - establishing links with vocational and technical education researchers and key research organisations.

- 2) the provision of a clearinghouse function to the vocational and technical education community in Australia and internationally. This includes:
 - producing and publishing the international Vocational Education and Training Research Database (VOCED) which comprises on-line information on vocational and technical education research, policy and practice in Australia and internationally;
 - co-ordinating an associated document delivery service for the Australian vocational and technical education sector; and
 - networking with other international vocational and technical education research agencies and sharing information on vocational and technical education.

- 3) the provision of a dissemination function which includes:
 - establishment of mechanisms to disseminate the results of vocational and technical education research carried out in Australia and overseas for the improvement of decision-making in the Australian vocational and technical education sector including briefings, seminars, workshops and conferences;
 - producing a range of value-added research products which synthesise the results of Australian and international vocational and technical education research including short publications, books and reports;
 - maintaining a web site which provides information on vocational and technical education research in Australia; and
 - increasing the awareness of the value of vocational and technical education research and the utilisation of research outcomes within the wider research community and the broader vocational and technical education community.

The NCVER manages the national research programme consistent with the research priorities as agreed by the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education on advice from the NCVER Board (based on the consultations undertaken as part of the research contract), the National Senior Officials Committee (NSOC) and the National Industry Skills Committee (NISC).

The research priorities for 2006 can be found at
http://www.ncver.edu.au/files/2006_national_research_priorities.pdf



Ministers have recently agreed to review research priorities every eighteen months.

The contract includes performance standards for the activities required under the contract. These are provided as Appendix D.

The National Research and Evaluation Contract is managed by the Australian Government (through the Department of Education, Science and Training) on behalf of the national vocational and technical education system.

The Statistical Services Contract

Good governance, accountability, planning and policy development is reliant on access to accurate and reliable vocational and technical education data, prepared in a consistent fashion across States and Territories.

The NCVER provides advice on standards for data, compiles and publishes data from State Training Authorities, undertakes survey and research work and advises governments on priorities to enhance the information base to support policy and performance monitoring.

The National Training Statistics Committee (NTSC), made up of representatives from Australian and State government officials, industry, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the NCVER (ex-officio), works with and advises the NCVER on national data collection, assists in developing data standards and on reporting for the national vocational and technical education system. The NTSC reports to the National Senior Officials Committee.

The Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) is the national data management standard.

The Annual National Report provides the basis for reporting against the National Strategy and National Priorities for vocational and technical education including the agreed key performance measures. The report is the mechanism for reporting to the Australian Parliament on the operation of the national vocational and technical education system.

DEST produces the annual report on behalf of the national vocational and technical education system, based on the preparatory data analysis undertaken by the NCVER.

The statistical services contract supports core components of the vocational and technical education system: the data for national and State level reporting on vocational and technical education performance outcomes, and activity and finances.

The objectives of the programme of work conducted under the Statistical Services Contract are for the NCVER to:

- constitute the central vocational and technical education statistical authority for the Australian Government and, by arrangements with the Governments of States and Territories, provide statistical services through the independent and professional collection, analysis and reporting of national vocational and technical education statistics;

- collect, compile, analyse, publish and disseminate accurate and timely vocational and technical education statistics provided by State and Territory Training Authorities, and related information, presenting the statistics in such a way as to aid interpretation and use, and designing data collection and reporting to ensure that it is directly useful to systems improvement;
- ensure effective collaboration between relevant education and training official bodies in the collection, compilation and dissemination of vocational and technical education statistics and related information;
- implement and ensure compliance with the AVETMISS;
- maintain a data warehousing facility for statistical information collected which will support strategic directions and policies; and
- provide independent and professional advice and assistance to official bodies in relation to statistics and other related matters.

Under the contract the NCVET is required to provide the following services:

- 1) development of the AVETMISS, in consultation with stakeholders;
- 2) management of the national vocational and technical education statistical collection including the development and implementation of collaborative strategies to improve data quality;
- 3) survey management of an approved survey programme;
- 4) dissemination of vocational and technical education statistical information held within the vocational and technical education provider collection and the New Apprenticeship collection and from surveys undertaken as a result of this contract;
- 5) provision of a secretariat and executive support to the NTSC;
- 6) assessment and reporting on the accuracy and reliability of the non-financial measures as required under the national vocational and technical education funding agreement; and
- 7) provision of the independent adjuster role to ensure comparability and consistency of published vocational and technical education statistics.

The contract includes performance standards for the delivery of the services. These are provided as Appendix E.

The Statistical Services contract is managed by the Australian Government (the Department of Education, Science and Training) on behalf of the national vocational and technical education system.



Funding under the contracts

National Research and Evaluation Programme funding

The National Research and Evaluation Programme contract provides for the NCVER to receive \$3.118 million in 2004, \$2.8 million in 2005 and \$3.2 million in 2006 (with 2006 funding yet to be confirmed).

The breakdown of funding under the contract for 2005 is:

Item	2005
Management fee (15% of total contract)	\$0.42 million
Research: open grants programme with funding paid to independent researchers outside NCVER	\$1.51 million
Dissemination of contract material	\$0.595 million
Clearinghouse function	\$0.275 million
Total	\$2.8 million

It should be noted that the consultations on research priorities, undertaken as part of managing the programme, are only partly funded by the contract, with the NCVER supplementing the cost from its core funds.

Statistical Services funding

The Statistical Services contract fee for the provision of the services is \$6.56 million in 2003, \$6.94 million in 2004 and \$6.67 million in 2005. Funding needed for statistical services is estimated to be \$6.98 million in 2006.

The breakdown of funding under the contract for 2005 is:

Item	2005
Surveys programme	\$3.09 million
Other activities	\$3.58 million
Total	\$6.67 million

NCVER Revenue

In order to provide the context for the amounts received by the NCVER under these two contracts, Table 1 provides the NCVER's main revenue sources for the 2004-05 and 2005-06 (estimated) financial year. Figures illustrating the break down of the revenue distribution for the services provided under the two contracts for 2004-05 and the disaggregation of the core (member contribution) funding expenditure are provided at Appendix F.

Table 1: NCVER Revenue 2004-2005 (actual) and 2005-2006 (estimated)

Source of revenue	Actual Revenue 2004-2005 (\$)	Estimated Revenue 2005-2006 (\$)
National Research and Evaluation contract ¹	3,053,926	3,674,458
Statistical Services contract ¹	6,830,527	6,930,110
Member contributions	1,197,755	1,360,650
Adult Literacy Research programme	398,122	415,058
Commercial & other	905,918	1,016,999
Total revenue	12,386,248	13,397,275

Notes: ¹ Revenue includes contract income from several programme years.

Source: NCVER

Table 1 shows that the contracts for the provision of research and statistical services are the dominant component of the NCVER's revenue. The largest proportion of funding received from the statistical services contracted is expended on surveys and the majority of core funding received by the NCVER is used for research.

Previous reviews of vocational and technical education research and statistics

Research

A review of the research and evaluation operating arrangements was conducted by Rae Taylor in 1999. This review found that the NCVER structure was operating successfully and that there had been a significant increase in the quantity of relevant research undertaken, along with some improvement in quality.

In late 2002 and early 2003, KPA Consulting and Phillips Curran undertook a number of reviews relating to the research and evaluation function. A report in September 2002 considered the management of research (the research and evaluation project and the key vocational education and training centres national project) and a report in March 2003 reviewed the National Research and Evaluation Committee and its management (essentially the research management contract).

Review outcomes have informed the NCVER's management of the research contract.

Statistics

The development of the statistics programme has been the subject of ongoing dialogue between the NCVER and vocational and technical education sector organisations. However a number of reports have been significant in setting priorities for the direction of vocational and technical education statistics development. These are:

- 'Review of Implementation of Performance Measurement in VET' (Boston Consulting, December 1995);
- A report to the Strategic Issues Working Group (NCVER and ABS): 'Review of VET statistics' (June 2002);
- 'The review of outcomes under the integrated national VET statistical information programme 1998-2003' (July 2003); and
- *Mapping the future: a forward plan for Australian vocational education and training statistics 2004 to 2010*, (ANTA, developed by the NTSC).

Issues and Invitation to Comment

The following issues are presented to gather information from those with an interest in the services provided by NCVER. Interested parties are invited to comment fully on any or all aspects of the Terms of Reference. To assist in focusing consideration of the services, a number of particular questions of interest have been developed under the four broad areas of: range of services; value for money; impact and responsiveness. In making a submission, views are greatly strengthened if they are supported by evidence and experience.

A. Range of Services

The range of services provided in the research and statistical services contracts (*as detailed earlier and in Appendices D and E*) and their alignment with the priorities and needs of shareholders, stakeholders and clients of the national vocational and technical education system, taking into account similar work conducted by other agencies in the system.

- A1. Does the range of research and statistical services provided by the NCVER currently meet your, or your organisation's, needs? If not, what gaps would you nominate for attention?
- A2. Are there aspects of the quality of the research and statistical services provided by the NCVER that you, or your organisation, consider praiseworthy or that need attention?
- A3. For some years the vocational and technical education sector has had the stated objective of an effective national vocational and technical education research programme which would:
 - provide high quality research;
 - encourage collaboration and foster partnerships between researchers, industry policy makers and practitioners in progressing the research agenda;
 - develop and maintain two way flows of information between researchers and the users of the research in a way which stimulates relevant research and makes resource outcomes accessible to potential users; and
 - build the capacity, in terms of human resources and the knowledge base, necessary for substantial ongoing research effort and enhance the ability of users to engage with and use research.

Would you or your organisation agree that these continue to be appropriate objectives?

Do you have any comments relating to how well the NCVER fulfils these objectives within the national vocational and technical education system?



B. Value for money

Value for money for research and statistics services provided by NCVET benchmarked against other agencies with comparable functions and responsibilities.

Bearing in mind the benchmarking that is still to be done as part of the review:

- B1. Do you, or your organisation, have any views on the criteria that might be considered in determining value for money?
- B2. Do you, or your organisation, have any views on the value for money of the services provided by the NCVET giving consideration to any criteria you have identified?
- B3. Given the diverse nature of the vocational and technical education sector, with public and private sector provision of both accredited and unaccredited training of varying duration, the collection of statistics and direction of research are challenging activities to undertake. This may be a factor bearing on considerations of value for money. Do you have any suggestions on strategies that might be adopted by the NCVET or the sector to increase sector support for the research and statistical work of the NCVET?

C. Impact

The impact of the research and statistics work completed by NCVET, especially its utility for government shareholders, stakeholders and clients of the national vocational and technical education system, taking into account levels of satisfaction with NCVET services.

- C1. What use do you or your organisation make of the research and statistics produced by the NCVET?
- C2. Are there any particular research reports that you consider have been significant in their impact on you, your organisation or the national vocational and technical education system?
- C3. Are there particular statistics produced by the NCVET that you, or your organisation, use regularly?
- C4. An important aspect of the usefulness of research and statistics for users can be the accessibility of these products and in recent years the vocational and technical education sector has given high priority to improving the information management and clearing house activities of the NCVET.

Do you have any comments on the dissemination activities undertaken by the NCVET and areas for possible improvement?

D. Responsiveness

Mechanisms for responding to shareholder and stakeholder priorities for statistics and research services in the set-up and during the life of the contracts, with particular reference to the role of the NCVER Board and the National Training Statistics Committee (NTSC).

The governance and accountability framework for the national vocational and technical education system provides for the NCVER Board, the National Senior Officials Committee (NSOC) and the National Industry Skills Committee to advise the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education on the national vocational and technical education research priorities prior to ministerial endorsement. Under the research contract the NCVER conducts the formal consultation process to develop the research priorities with stakeholders as outlined in 'A model for providing advice on national research priorities for vocational education and training'.

The NTSC, working with the NCVER, provides the mechanism by which priorities for the development of vocational and technical education system statistics are determined. Under the statistical contract the NCVER provides secretariat support to the Committee and the NTSC reports to the NSOC.

- D1. What mechanisms do you, or your organisation, use (or envisage using under the new arrangements) to ensure that your priorities for research and statistical services are reflected in the work of the NCVER?
- D2. Do you consider these mechanisms to be adequate?
- D3. Do you have suggestions for improvements?
- D4. Individuals and organisations can also influence the direction of research and statistics through direct feedback to staff of the NCVER and other sector organisations. What is your experience of the responsiveness of the NCVER and its staff to your feedback?

Thank you for taking the time to read this paper and considering the issues raised and thank you in anticipation for any contribution you make to the Review.

Appendices

Appendix A: Members of the Review of NCVER Research and Statistical Services Committee

Review Committee Members

Organisation	Name
States and Territory Governments	
New South Wales	Mr Phil Daniels
Victoria	Mr Phil Clarke
Queensland	Ms Sue Fergusson
South Australia	Mr Craig Fowler
Western Australia	Mr John Harris
Tasmania	Mr Nick Evans
Australian Capital Territory	Ms Anne Houghton
Northern Territory	Mr John Hassed
Other Stakeholders	
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Mr Damon Thomas
Australian Council for Private Education and Training	Ms Julie Moss
Australian Council of Trade Unions	Ms Michelle Bissett
Australian Industry Group	Mr Doug Wright
Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association	Associate Professor Peter Kell
TAFE Directors Australia	Mr Kevin Harris
Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia	Mr Robert Mallett
Australian Bureau of Statistics	Mr Ian Crettenden
Client and Student Voice Action Group	Mr Bill Wilson



Appendix B: Scope of the Review and Terms of Reference

Review of NCVER Contracts under Strategic National Initiatives: National Research and Evaluation Contract and Statistical Services Contract

Scope of the Review

The review will focus on the efficacy of the National Research and Evaluation Contract and the Statistical Services Contract for shareholders, stakeholders and clients of the national vocational and technical education system.

Terms of Reference

The review should address the following issues:

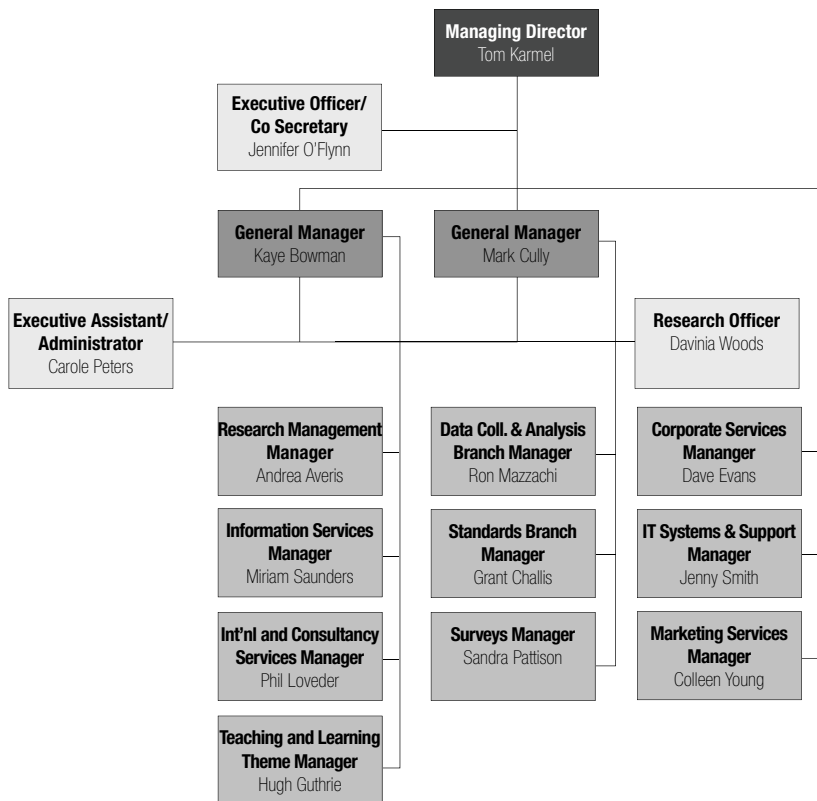
- The range of services provided in the statistics and research contracts and their alignment with the priorities and needs of shareholders, stakeholders and clients of the national vocational and technical education system, taking into account similar work conducted by other agencies in the system.
- Value for money for research and statistics services provided by NCVER benchmarked against other agencies with comparable functions and responsibilities.
- The impact of the research and statistics work completed by NCVER, especially its utility for government shareholders, stakeholders and clients of the national vocational and technical education system, taking into account levels of satisfaction with NCVER services.
- Mechanisms for responding to shareholder and stakeholder priorities for statistics and research services in the set-up and during the life of the contracts, with particular reference to the role of the NCVER Board and the National Training Statistics Committee.

Appendix C: NCVER Board Members and Organisation

NCVER Board

Chair	Mr Peter Grant
Managing Director	Dr Tom Karmel
Director	Mr Peter Glynn
Director	Ms Aurora Andruska
Director	Ms Patricia Neden
Director	Ms Linda Simon
Director	Mr Michael Stevens
Director	Ms Marli Wallace

NCVER Management Structure



Appendix D: Performance standards for research activities

The activities and performance standards for the research management function are:

Activity	Standards
Identifying research themes and priorities in collaboration with DEST, that support the National VET Strategy 2004-2010, for each year of the contract through consultations with key stakeholders around Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive and effective participation of key stakeholders including with industry representatives and VTE practitioners to identify opportunities for collaboration and involvement • Agreed timetable met
Managing the research programme that is contracted during the period 2004-2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide range of successful applicants selected through an independent, transparent and comprehensive selection process • Development of a strategic work programme which informs national policy development and implementation within the VTE sector • Specific projects monitored against agreed timelines and project outcomes as specified in the project contracts • Sound project and financial management practices adopted • Formal reporting on the strategic progress of the work programme to the appropriate forum, no more than twice a year • Agreed timetables met
Increasing the quality and relevance of VTE research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a plan for assuring the quality of the research programme • Implementing the plan in the research programme through researcher meetings, peer review process, use of author's kit, regular contact with researchers
Establishing links with VTE researchers and research organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular consultations with other VTE researchers and organisations to identify work in progress and strategic work plans

The activities and performance standards for the clearinghouse function are:

Activity	Standards
Producing and publishing the International Vocational Education and Training Research Database (VOCED)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collecting, editing and publishing information about research, policy and practice in VTE in Australia and internationally through the world wide web • Maintaining the coverage of VOCED through indexing and abstracting articles from Australian and international journals and key international monographs • Supplying requested documents in a timely manner to the Australian VTE community • Monitoring the quality and relevance for the VTE community of the information included in the database
Networking with other international VTE research agencies and sharing information on VTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying and liaising with key producers of relevant information in Australia and internationally • Sharing information on VTE publications with other organisations within Australia and internationally with whom NCVET has established memorandum of understanding

The critical success factors and performance standards for the dissemination function are:

Activity	Standards
Establish mechanisms to disseminate the results of VTE research carried out in Australia and overseas for the improvement of decision-making in the Australian VTE sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of research reports in a format that suits the needs of the target audience for each report • Clear identification of key stakeholders for dissemination purposes • Development of dissemination strategies for each key stakeholder group • Feedback from key stakeholders on effectiveness of dissemination strategy • Development of a range of face- to-face dissemination activities targeted at key stakeholder groups
Production of a range of value-added research products which synthesise the results of Australian and international VTE research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of short targeted publications aimed at key stakeholder groups • Development of a range of face- to-face dissemination activities targeted at key stakeholder groups
Maintenance of web-site which provides information on the results of VTE research in Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up-to-date information about research and evaluation projects on the web • Access to the web by different stakeholder groups • Feedback from key stakeholders on the usefulness of the information on the web • Promotion of dissemination initiatives on the web
Increasing the awareness of the value of VTE research and the utilisation of research outcomes within the wider research community and the broader VTE community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program of workshops and seminars for key stakeholder groups • Feedback from key stakeholders on the effectiveness of the programme of workshops and seminars • Promotion of research products throughout the VTE community using a variety of media

Appendix E: Performance standards for statistical services

The activities and performance standards for maintenance and development of the AVETMISS are:

Activity	Standards
<p>Implement changes to the current AVETMISS as recommended by the National Training Statistics Committee.</p> <p>Keep the current AVETMISS under review as directed by the National Training Statistics Committee</p> <p>The further development of an operationally relevant AVETMISS applying to the whole VTE sector and promotion of the national standard to States and Territories</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice from the NTSC and other stakeholders sought to determine changes to the AVETMISS. • Recommendations made by the National Training Statistics Committee incorporated into the AVETMISS.
National Consultations conducted to consider all changes to the AVETMISS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes made to the AVETMISS as recommended by the Australian Government, States and Territories and other stakeholders within a period agreed by the NTSC.
Use of national data classification standards in the AVETMISS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AVETMISS data items will be consistent with published ABS national classification standards. • NCVET will work collaboratively with MCEETYA and DEST to establish AVETMISS compliance of VET in Schools statistics.
Systemic changes and reviews to national data systems conducted as directed by the National Training Statistics Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes made to national data systems as recommended by the NTSC and within a time period agreed by the Committee.

The activities and performance standards for the management of the VTE provider collection, Apprentice and Trainee collection and Financial Data collection are:

Activity	Standards
National VTE provider collection and publication cycle completed annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publications released in accordance with schedule specifications.
National Apprentice and Trainee collection and publication cycle completed annually	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publications released in accordance with schedule specifications.
Release of data by States and Territories to the Consultant is consistent with the protocols agreed to by the NSOC for the VTE provider collection and Apprentice and Trainee data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocols for release of data be negotiated and reviewed annually with States and Territories. • Protocols for the collection, storage and release of data and statistics is developed and adhered to.
Respond to requests for assistance from States and Territories, which specifically relate to improvements in data quality, processing and reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance given to States and Territories which addresses specific quality improvement issues based on a knowledge of emerging practices across all jurisdictions.
The consultant has the responsibility for developing the data validation process, including the actual software for that purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The AVETPack software is to be updated to align with changes to AVETMISS, supplied to States and Territories and user support provided. • Business rules for validation checking to be considered by the NTSC.

Activity	Standards
Data collections verified for accuracy and compliance upon submission to the Consultant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The AVETPack software is to be updated to align with changes to AVETMISS, supplied to States and Territories and user support provided. Business rules for validation checking to be considered by the NTSC.
Continuous improvement of data collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuous improvement of the collections (eg unique student identifier and capturing total delivery of recognised training) is pursued in consultation with DEST and the NTSC.
Financial data collected against the AVETMISS for VTE financial data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines and reporting formats updated annually. Meeting convened annually with finance officers. Publication released in accordance with schedule specifications.

The activities and performance standards for the management of the surveys programme are:

Activity	Standards
<p>All surveys developed and conducted as agreed by the National Training Statistics Committee in accordance with the Surveys Plan.</p> <p>All surveys to be overseen by a single Steering Committee reporting to the National Training Statistics Committee.</p> <p>The surveys to be considered within the programme include, but are not restricted to, the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student outcomes Survey (SOS) - Survey of Employer Views (SEV) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NTSC to ensure no conflict of interest arises in the survey tendering processes. The Steering Committee overseeing surveys to be a sub-committee of the NTSC. The consultant will meet all costs associated with Steering Committee meetings. Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs) at the national level from the SOS and SEV to be made available to DEST. Minutes from the NTSC and Steering Committee meetings to serve as documentation or resolutions.
Targeted surveys developed and conducted where a need is identified and agreement reached by the NTSC as to the most appropriate means of conducting and awarding the survey.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requirements for all targeted surveys to be determined by written notification provided by the NTSC through DEST. Indigenous face-to-face SOS survey conducted in 2004. The consultant to conduct surveys according to agreed/ negotiated requirements.
Do IT yourself Survey package arrangements are made available to stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support provided to stakeholders utilising the Do IT yourself Survey package. Review of the usage of the package is undertaken by June 2003. NTSC decision on whether to continue with the package is obtained by June 2003.

The activities and performance standards for the marketing and dissemination of VTE statistical information are:

Activity	Standards
<p>Information released into the public domain to be correct and accurate.</p> <p>Information released into the public domain to conform to agreed protocols.</p> <p>Methodology used in publications and presentations to be transparent and robust.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A base range of summary statistics from the various collections and surveys is available via a range of media. • Timely one-off reports and analyses are produced in response to stakeholder needs. • Reports providing an extensive picture of activity and outcomes are produced as determined by NTSC. • Continuous improvement of data analysis and reporting (eg segmentation approaches) to be pursued in consultation with DEST and the NTSC. • Information and methodology to be available for scrutiny by the Australian Government, States and Territories before public release. • Errors in public domain information and other uses inconsistent with the protocols agreed to by NSOC, to be clarified and corrected via public notification. • Adoption of protocols for data collection, analysis and dissemination.
<p>All data to be provided promptly, on request and at no cost, to the Australian Government, States and Territories unless they require substantial value adding.</p> <p>Statistical requests to be completed in a timely manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All formal written statistical requests met within one week unless they require substantial 'value adding' by the consultant. • Email inquiries relating to statistics answered satisfactorily within 48 hours unless they require substantial 'value adding' by the consultant.
<p>Confidentialised Unit Record Files (CURFs) from the VTE provider and Apprentice and Trainee collections to be produced as standard outputs.</p> <p>CURFs to be made available on request and at no cost to the Australian Government, States and Territories for research and policy purposes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests for CURFs met within two weeks, unless requiring substantial 'value adding' by the consultant. • Updated time series VTE provider CURF to be provided to DEST annually. • Formal written approval from the Australian Government, States and Territories to be sought and received before CURFs are released into the public domain. • Access to CURFs to be on the strict condition that the protocols agreed to by NSOC are not contravened.

The activities and performance standards for National Training Statistics Committee secretariat and support are:

Activity	Standards
The consultant will provide full secretariat services to the National Training Statistics Committee in accordance with set arrangements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A meeting timetable will be developed by mid January each year at the latest in consultation with the chair and DEST • Papers and minutes will be of a standard acceptable to the chair and DEST. • Five weeks prior to each full committee meeting, agenda items will be called for from all committee members. • Three weeks prior to each full committee meeting, the chair, a representative from NCVER, a DEST representative and the secretariat will discuss and prioritise the draft agenda via teleconference. • Two weeks prior to each full committee meeting, the papers will be delivered to committee members. • In addition, an electronic copy of all agenda papers will be provided to DEST. • Draft minutes will be circulated to committee members within two weeks of each meeting.

The activities and performance standards for data quality assurance and improvement are:

Activity	Standards
Regular quality control audits taken of data systems, activity and outputs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes implemented and audits of activity and output measures undertaken to the complete satisfaction of the Authority, its relevant committees, State and Territories, and other stakeholders.
Work co-operatively with States and Territories on data systems, procedures and monitoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompt identification and evaluation of changes to systems and procedures. • Recommendation of 'best practice' to other jurisdictions. • Sample transaction checks undertaken within providers, according to protocols agreed to by the Authority and States and Territories.
Classification of qualifications and units of competency under Training Packages.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coding is consistent with the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) and the Australian Standard Classification of Education (ASCED).
Improvements in quality of data from the national VTE statistical collection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports provided to the Authority and States and Territories prior to the annual release of data, to detail all quality checks undertaken and provide an explanation (to the satisfaction of the Authority) of all annual changes in data collection, scope and measures. • Reports to reflect observable improvement in the quality of data.



Appendix F: NCVET main revenue sources

A graphical representation of main revenue sources for the NCVET in 2004-05 is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: NCVET Revenue 2004-05

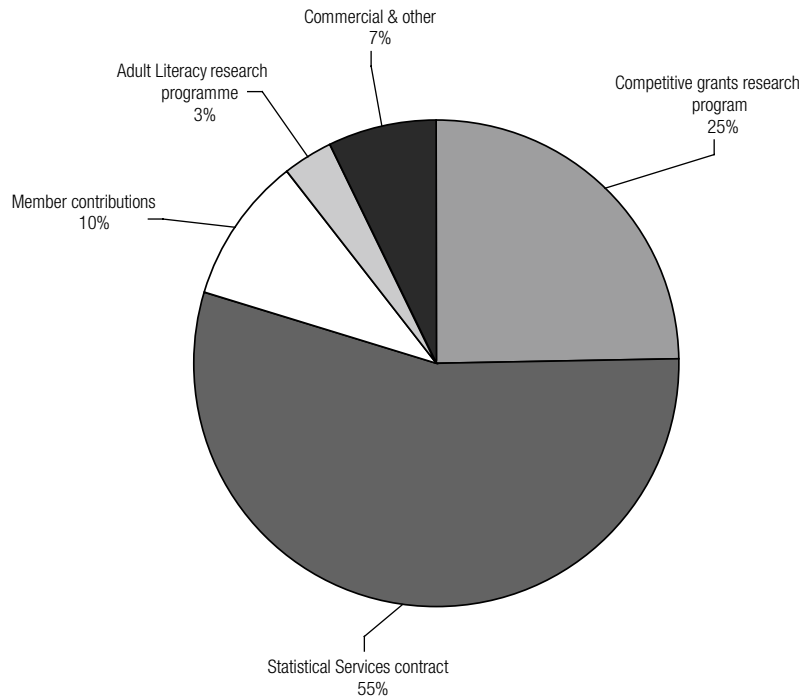


Figure 1 shows that the contracts for the provision of research and statistical services are the dominant component of the NCVET's revenue.

Revenue distribution for the services provided under the two contracts for 2004-05 in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2: Research and evaluation programme revenue distribution 2004-05

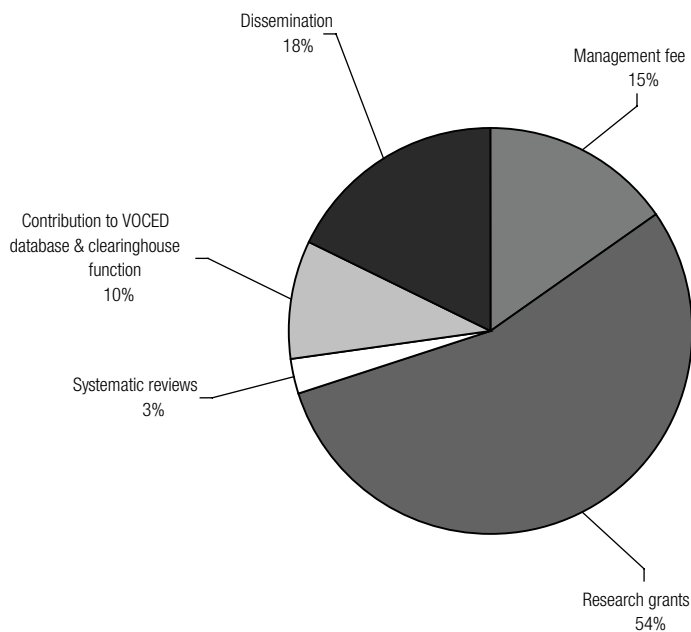


Figure 2 shows that the majority of funding received under the research and evaluation contract is distributed as research grants.

Figure 3: Statistical services revenue distribution 2004-05

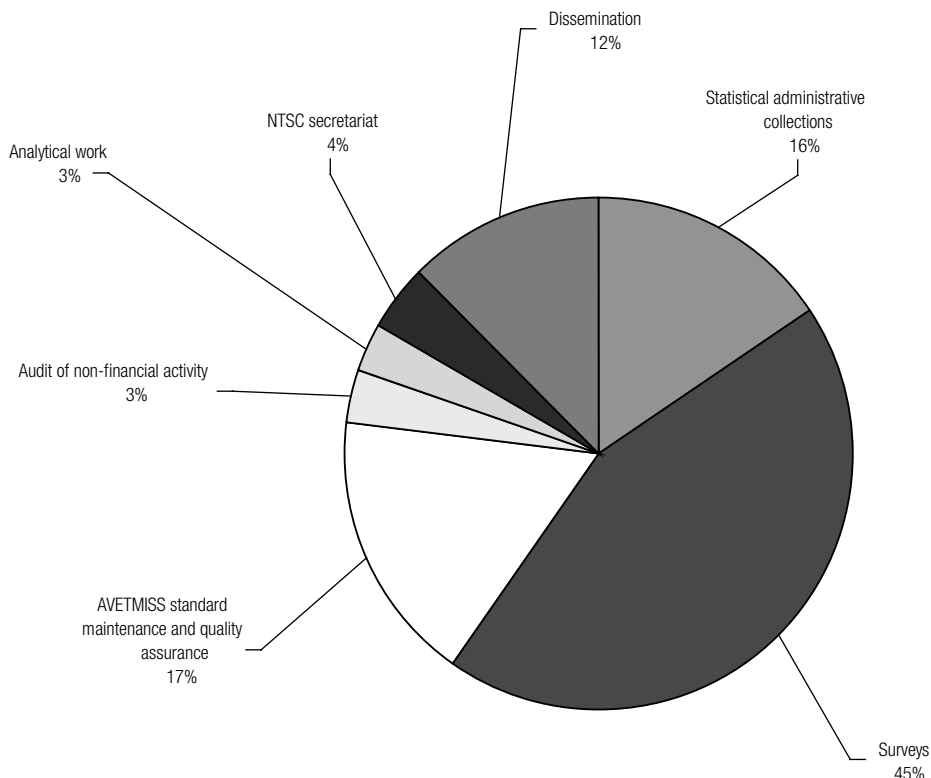


Figure 3 shows that the largest proportion of funding received from the statistical services contracted is expended on surveys.

A disaggregation of the core (member contribution) funding expenditure is provided in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Use of member contributions 2004-05

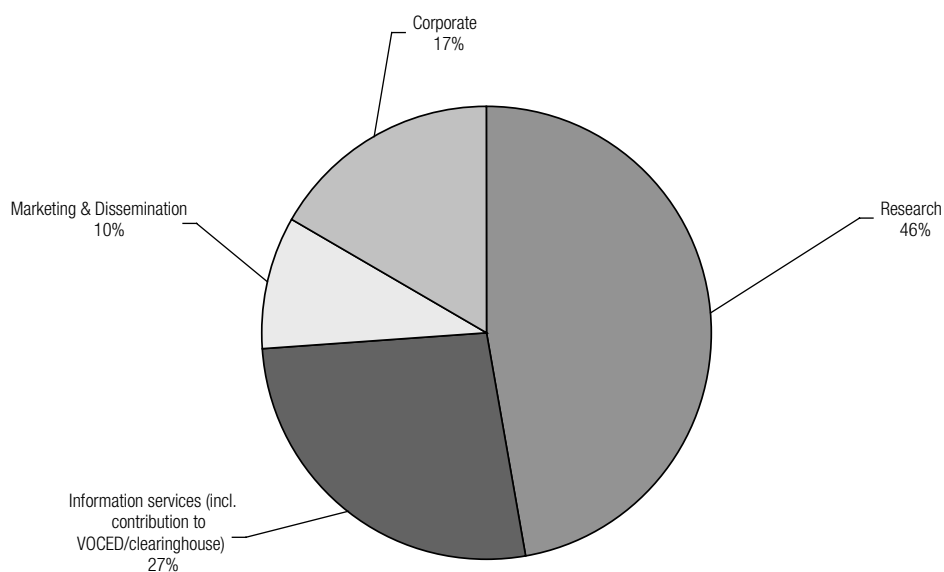


Figure 4 shows that nearly half of the NCVER's core funding is used for research.



Appendix G: List of acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ANZSCO	Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations
ASCED	Australian Standard Classification of Education
AVETMISS	Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard
CURFs	Confidentialised Unit Record Files
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
MCVTE	Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NISC	National Industry Skills Committee
NSOC	National Senior Officials Committee
NTSC	National Training Statistics Committee
NVETRE	National Vocational Education and Training Research and Evaluation programme
PDF	Portable Document Format
SEV	Survey of Employer Views
SNI	Strategic National Initiatives
SOS	Student Outcomes Survey
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VTE	Vocational and Technical Education
VOCED	Vocational Education and Training Research Database