

A-NEWS

The Newsletter of the Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association
December 2008

AVETRA News

From the President

AVETRA has been very busy since the last A-News, with members running a very successful series of OctoberVET events, and many involved in detailed planning for the next conference in Sydney in April (details below).

Many thanks to Bobby Harreveld, the overall co-ordinator for OctoberVET 2008. This was definitely the biggest OctoberVET ever, and also the longest-running - events took place from September to November! Thanks to all the people who organised local events. See the OctoberVET web page for details of events held; presentations and photos will be posted here in due course.

<http://www.avetra.org.au/calendar/index.shtml>

As you may remember, AVETRA has a contract from NCVET to run a mentoring network to support the NCVET Community of Practice made up of practitioner researchers. Llandis Barratt-Pugh is managing this project supported by a reference group from the Executive. Several AVETRA members are working as mentors and the research projects are all very interesting. Darryl Dymock and Stephen Billett have been working hard on 'Ray Barker Project 3', on the impact of VET research, which was funded by a donation from life member Ray Barker, and we look forward to Darryl and Stephen presenting their findings next April at the conference

Academic members will be pleased to hear that NCVET grants have been restored to the DEEWR national competitive grants register ('Category 1 funding') after falling off by mistake for a year or two.

I would like to wish all AVETRA members and their families a happy Christmas and a bit of a rest during January.



Erica Smith, President

AVETRA News

12th Annual Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association Conference, Crowne Plaza Coogee Beach, Sydney, NSW, 16-17 April 2009

http://www.avetra.org.au/annual_conference/index.shtml

This year's theme is "Aligning Participants, Policy and Pedagogy: Traction and Tensions in VET Research". The conference co-convenors are Ros Brennan Kemmis and Melinda Randall with an able team of NSW members.

Registration is now open, so if you are wanting to pay from 2008 funds there is time to do so!

We have received around 80 abstracts for papers and workshops for the conference, and are hoping for a record attendance at beautiful Coogee Beach. Five exciting pre-conference workshops are offered on 15 April - see http://www.avetra.org.au/annual_conference/pre-conference.shtml for full details. Thanks to those members who've offered to run these workshops.

Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education (MCVTE) Communiqué

Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard released this communiqué on 21 November. Its main points are:

- that further work is to be undertaken on the national partnership on VET reform (aka market design) before its implementation
- Ministers will seek COAG agreement to re-align the responsibilities of MCVTE by taking on post-school education issues (including VET, higher, international and adult education and possibly the Australian Qualifications Framework) and employment (in other words a move to a single tertiary sector)
- a new single-layer equity advisory body, the National VET Equity Advisory Council, is to be established to streamline equity advisory arrangements and raise the profile of equity issues to increase participation in VET and ultimately employment
- membership of the National Quality Council (NQC) will remain as it currently stands until the end of 2009 in recognition of its importance as a key governance structure during the national training system transition to new governance and administrative arrangements
- the 2009 Work Plan of the NQC will ensure as a priority the integration of green skills within core competencies for all apprenticeship and traineeship qualifications and develop standards for RTOs to be voluntarily certified as green skills providers

Inaugural VET Researcher of the Year

Congratulations to Roger Harris, Professor of Adult and Vocational Education at the University of South Australia, who has been awarded the inaugural national VET Researcher of the Year Award, presented at the National Training Awards in November 2008. This award aims to recognise and promote the value of an evidence base in improving policy and practice in the VET sector. Roger is a foundation member of the AVETRA Executive. He won AVETRA's Ray Barker Award for Distinguished Service to VET Research in 2006.

News from abroad: Reaching out to Aceh

AVETRA members might be interested in an initiative to build research capacity in Aceh. The following is an abridged version of an article by Eve Warburton (Email: arti.aceh_2@yahoo.com) first published in *Asian Currents* (<http://iceaps.anu.edu.au/asian-currents.html>)

Already isolated from the rest of Indonesia and the international community by thirty years of civil war, Aceh's universities were hard-hit by the tsunami of 26 December 2004 because many academics lived in the worst-affected areas of Banda Aceh. As part of the international response to the crisis, a consortium of nine Australian universities and a number of partner universities in Indonesia established the Aceh Research Training Institute (ARTI). The project is a three-year commitment as part of AusAID's Aceh Rehabilitation Program (ARP).

ARTI's principal objective is to build the capacity of individual researchers to undertake high-quality, relevant social science research. Training consists of three levels of selective entry courses in research methodologies. To date ARTI has trained over 400 local academics, NGO staff and civil servants in basic social science research methodologies. From this pool, over 80 of the most promising researchers have gone on to attend level 2 courses, which consist of more in-depth methodological training on specific areas of research that are particularly relevant in the Acehnese context.

The institute is also creating opportunities to share resources and expand networks by bringing together Indonesian and international academics to work in partnership with researchers in Aceh. As a result, one of the most important and sustainable outcomes of the project has been the

professional and personal contacts that Acehnese participants have made with guest lecturers, supervisors and PhD students from around Indonesia and the world. <http://www.arti.unimelb.edu.au>

Calls for Papers/Submissions

Network on Innovative Apprenticeship conference

The international Network on Innovative Apprenticeship (INAP) is holding a conference in Turin, Italy on September 17 and 18 2009. The conference is in conjunction with ETF and VETNET Europe, and focuses on transitions from school to VET and on the development of vocational literacy and vocational identity in apprenticeships. Papers are invited, with outlines due by March 1st. Details will be available soon on the INAP web site <http://www.innovative-apprenticeship.net/> but in the meantime enquiries may be directed to Erica Smith who is a member of the organising committee and can forward you a flyer e.smith@ballarat.edu.au

Conferences and other Events

The Big Skills Conference, Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour, NSW, 2-5 March 2009

skillsconference2009@deewr.gov.au <http://deewr.gov.au/skillsconference2009>

The 2009 Skills Conference is the first of its kind to be held in Australia and will bring together major national and international players with an interest in skills and training to debate issues.

18th National Vocational Education and Training Research Conference 'No Frills', University of Ballarat, campus TBA, Ballarat, Vic, 8-10 July 2009

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/>

Sponsored jointly by NCVER and the University of Ballarat, this annual conference is considered one of the best value events on the research calendar. It provides an excellent forum for those in vocational education and training research to network, present and discuss papers on current or recently completed work.

AFR Higher Education Conference, Amora Hotel Jamison, Sydney, NSW, 13-14 March 2009

At this conference eminent higher education leaders will outline their aspirations and strategies for influencing new policy, funding and structural directions.

Senior Schooling Conference 2009, Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, Brisbane, QLD, 19-20 March 2009

<http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/syllabus/6168.html>

Enabling educational choice and providing pathways as key goals for senior schooling is the focus of this conference.

Australian Higher Education Conference 2009: Transforming Education, Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre, Sydney, NSW, 24-26 March 2009

<http://www.acevents.com.au/education2009/>

Launching Climate Change @ Work Conference 2009: Creating the Sustainable Workplace, Hilton, Sydney, NSW, 3 April 2009

<http://www.wrc.org.au>

This conference will discuss the latest insights and information on climate change and how it will impact on your workplace, the employment relationship, skills and the labour market.

National Career Conference 2009, Grand Hyatt, Melbourne, Vic, 15-17 April 2009

<http://www.abcon.biz/cdaa2009.htm>

The theme for this conference is 'Get smart: Career development value adds for people and business.'

AITD 2009 National Conference, Australian Technology Park, Sydney, NSW, 21-22 April 2009

<http://www.aitd.com.au/conference>

New Zealand Vocational Education and Training Research Forum, Rutherford House, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand, 22 and 23 April 2009

<http://www.itf.org.nz/research-forum-2009.html>

Registration for the VET Research Forum will open in late January 2009.

International Conference on Organisational Learning, Knowledge and Capabilities (OLKC), Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 26-28 April 2009

<http://www.feweb.vu.nl/olkc2009>; Contact Jeanne Mengis jeanne.mengis@lu.unisi.ch

OLKC is a leading international conference for researchers in the area of organisational knowledge and learning. The conference is international in scope, and inclusive of the wide range of intellectual perspectives that have helped to make organisational knowledge and learning one of the most vibrant areas for contemporary research and debate. Conference theme is 'Connecting Worlds'.

VET Teaching Conference 2009, Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, Brisbane, QLD, 26-27 May 2009

<http://www.vetteaching.com.au>

Recent Publications

New ABS report on education and work

More Australians are seeking qualifications including bachelor degrees and certificates according to new results from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Key figures released in the *Education and Work, Australia May 2008* report include:

- 2.5 million Australians were enrolled in a course of study as at May 2008
- The proportion of people with non-school qualifications has increased to 54 per cent, from 42 per cent in 1998
- Of those undertaking study, 22 per cent were at TAFE Institutes
- Some three quarters of people with qualifications were employed full-time, compared to just under two thirds of employed people that were not formally qualified

<http://abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/556A439CD3D7E8A8CA257242007B3F32?OpenDocument>

Vocational education and training and people with a disability: A review of the research by Tabatha Griffin and Lisa Nechvoglod, NCVET 2008

There has been much research and discussion about how people with a disability engage with vocational education and training (VET). This paper summarises what we know about VET participation, education and employment outcomes, and the costs and benefits of vocational education and training for people with a disability. In doing so, it also highlights further questions and where future research efforts could be focused <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2075.html>

What do Australians think about VET?

Vocal: the Australian journal of vocational education and training in schools. Vol. 7, 2008-2009, pp.143-148.

This article reports on a research study into attitudes to vocational education and training (VET), prepared for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations in 2008. The

study aimed to identify any differences in attitudes to the traditional trades as career occupations and to the VET sector in general, across segments within the community, particularly students, parents, secondary school career advisors, and employers in Australia. Generally, the overall image of VET was mixed. The study suggested that VET has an image problem as the 'pathway of choice' for career education and training compared with university.

***Skills in use: labour market and workplace trends in skills usage in Australia* by Ian Watson, Sydney: New South Wales. Dept of Education and Training and Australia. Dept of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2008.**

This report evaluates survey data on what employers and employees say about the use of skills at work. The report contains new information on skill shortages, skill gaps in the existing workforce, and the extent, distribution and impact of workplace training in Australia. This research is important for governments wanting to maximise the return on public investment in training, and for training organisations wanting a fuller understanding of the industry context in which they operate. http://www.skillecosystem.net/news/1220674310_32594.php

***An analysis of FEE-HELP in the vocational education and training sector* by Bruce Chapman, Mark Rodrigues and Chris Ryan. Canberra: Centre for Economic Policy Research, 2008.**

The public vocational education and training (VET) system is now one of the few areas in Australia's tertiary education system where students are required to pay up-front fees without access to loan assistance. These arrangements may lead to sub-optimal educational outcomes to the extent that prospective students reject a VET education on the basis of short-term financial constraints. This paper analyses some of the important issues related to the adoption of FEE-HELP, a 2005 Federal Government financial instrument based on the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS). It is argued that income contingent loans of this kind are associated with the advantages of both default-protection and consumption smoothing.

Jobs and Other Opportunities

Dr Ray Barker AVETRA Research fellowships

AVETRA members are invited to apply for a Ray Barker AVETRA Ambassador Award of \$1500. The objective of the AVETRA ambassadors program is to provide opportunities for members to undertake activities that improve their research capacity, assist build an understanding of VET research in their communities or to conduct some events that build awareness and involvement of AVETRA members. Willingness to conduct an event that could be badged as an OctoberVET activity will be considered favourably.

Options for AVETRA Ambassadors programs could include:

- Presenting a proposal for a paper at the AVETRA conference for the first time.
- Attending the AVETRA conference and reporting back to the membership or a VET community.
- Conducting an event to involve AVETRA members
- Disseminating VET research to the membership of AVETRA and promoting VET research to the community.
- Other activities to build AVETRA's profile as a professional VET research association.

The applicants should provide a description of:

- Description of the proposed activity.
- How it will benefit AVETRA.
- Estimated cost of activity.

The applications will be assessed by a selection panel drawn from the AVETRA Executive committee.

Expressions of interest should be submitted by 5 January 2009 and addressed to:

Moira Brown, AVETRA, PO Box 576, Crows Nest, NSW 2065.

Tel: 02 9431 8690

Fax: 02 9431 8677

Email avetra@apcaust.com.au

NCVER scholarships for novice researchers

If you are a VET practitioner, who is interested in developing your research skills in ways that are relevant to your workplace, you may wish apply for an NCVER Communities of Practice Research Scholarship grant. Funding of \$4,000 is available to novice researchers to conduct a project over one year, starting in April 2009. You must have the support of your employer, and they must be willing to match funding.

NCVER is also offering a \$4,000 scholarship that is being coordinated by the University of South Australia. It is aimed at those employed in the VET sector and offers a grant to undertake further formal study by research in a VET-related field. Applications are due to Roger Harris roger.harris@unisa.edu.au by 15 December 2008.

For more information please visit: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/tenders.html>

About AVETRA

AVETRA is the peak professional association for VET researchers. Its ability to be a sustainable and viable association depends on its membership. Members are urged to continue their membership and to encourage their colleagues to join AVETRA. AVETRA services include:

- An annual VET international research conference
- Two editions of *International Journal of Training Research per annum*
- The bi-monthly AVETRA e-newsletter with the latest news in the VET sector as well as VET research.
- The new *Research Today* publication twice a year.
- OctoberVET workshops organized by AVETRA members in centres as widely spread as Perth, Darwin, Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.
- The AVETRA website with VET research links and information
- Awards for VET researchers including the joint award with TAFE Directors Australia, the Berwyn Clayton Award, The Ray Barker Award, and the AVETRA Best paper Award.

HELP AVETRA help VET research and join now if you are not a member. Full **\$145** (GST inclusive) and Student memberships **\$71.50** including GST are available to join AVETRA.

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