

## **Information Paper**

# **Measuring Learning in Australia**

## **Plan to Improve the Quality, Coverage and Use of Education and Training Statistics**

**2004**



New  
Issue

# **Information Paper**

## **Measuring Learning in Australia**

### **Plan to Improve the Quality, Coverage and Use of Education and Training Statistics**

**2004**

**Dennis Trewin**  
**Australian Statistician**

AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS

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**PREFACE** .....

*Measuring Learning in Australia: Plan to Improve the Quality, Coverage and Use of Education and Training Statistics* is part of a collaborative approach by a range of agencies to improve Australia's education and training statistics.

The plan is a statement of agreed priorities and actions for the development of education and training information over the next three years. It was developed by the National Education and Training Statistics Unit, a joint initiative of all state, territory and Australian Government education and training departments, the Australian National Training Authority and the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The project has been guided by the Unit's Management Board, and has involved extensive consultation with stakeholders.

Improved information will better support decision making by policy makers and those delivering education and training. It will also better assist research and discussion in the wider community on learning issues and outcomes.

Dennis Trewin  
Australian Statistician

Peter Plummer  
Chair, Management Board  
National Education and Training  
Statistics Unit





The Plan is an agreement among key stakeholders on the statistical work required in the education and training fields to support policy, planning and accountability and provide a better evidence base for analysing learning outcomes in the wider social and economic context. It recognises the diversity of arrangements for the collection and dissemination of education and training statistics, including the work of education and training agencies, the ABS, and various committees and task forces.

The Plan provides:

- a map of the sources of information and work planned or underway to improve data for education and training across Australia
- a detailed list of priority areas for improving the quality, coverage and use of education and training information across Australia.

A primary aim of the Plan is to maximise the use and ensure the quality of current data and to minimise the need for additional collection of information.

Development of the Plan involved key stakeholders reaching a common view on some core issues:

- agreement on priorities to improve the relevant information set
- agreement on responsibilities for the various actions to improve the information, including timeframes
- agreement to support an agency to coordinate the Plan and its operation.

The Plan was endorsed by Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Chief Executive Officers and Australian Education Systems Officials Committee (AESOC) in late 2003. The development of the Plan has stimulated discussion and the identified priorities have been included in work programs of stakeholders, as shown in Chapter 6.

#### *Operation and review*

The operation of the Plan will be managed by the National Education and Training Statistics Unit (NETSU), which is located within the ABS. The NETSU will undertake an annual review of progress in addressing the agreed priorities, and report the findings to its Management Board for consideration in planning activities for the following year. At the end of 2006, a comprehensive review of the entire Plan will be conducted.

## POLICY BACKGROUND

Education and training are important means by which individuals can realise their full potential and make positive choices about their lives and wellbeing. Education and training are often essential to gaining paid employment, and can provide the pathway to a rewarding career. Education and training also support full participation in social, cultural and economic life.

Some of the key policy issues are:

- monitoring and improving educational attainment levels for individuals and target groups
- promoting equitable access to education
- achieving sufficient levels of literacy to empower individuals in their daily lives
- ensuring staffing and other resources are sufficient and appropriately distributed
- ensuring people leaving education are equipped to meet the expectations of industry and the labour market, and have the necessary vocational and generalist skills
- facilitating lifelong learning.

In recent times the distinction between 'education' as the acquisition of knowledge within a formal institutional setting, and 'training' as the acquisition of job-related skills in vocationally-focused institutions or the workplace, has diminished considerably, and is for many purposes no longer meaningful. The broader and more flexible concept of 'learning' is now seen as a more useful term, which is particularly useful in extending the scope of interest and research beyond activities which take place in the traditional formal sectors to include a wider range of learning activities.

The growing perception that education and training are inseparably linked to Australia's place in the global economy, as discussed in the 1987 Department of Employment, Education and Training publication *Skills for Australia*, has led to more flexible learning pathways, and an increasing vocational focus for learning in Australia. These themes were expanded in a stream of state and federal reports produced in subsequent years. The Australian Education Council's 1991 report *Young People's Participation in Education and Training* was particularly influential in its advocacy of cross-sectoral links and improved flexibility for students as they move from school to work and further learning. More recently, the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Taskforce has produced *Footprints to the Future* (2001), a document aimed at improving support systems for young people and their families in the transition from school to adult life. The steady implementation of reforms through reports such as this has resulted in major changes to the landscape of learning in Australia.

## POLICY BACKGROUND

*continued*

The provision of education and training has undergone significant change in recent years. There has been an increase in the number of institutions providing education and training across traditional sectoral boundaries. There is greater emphasis on appropriate skills formation and entry level training, particularly in the vocational education and training sector, and industry now has greater involvement in the development of competency-based training packages and curriculum in both the vocational education and training and higher education sectors.

The increased extent of learning activities undertaken by Australians, the increasing government focus on lifelong learning, the need for continuous re-skilling, and the diversity of learning pathways, all require reliable information to determine the economic, social and personal outcomes of these activities.

Within this broad context, key developments include:

- an increasing focus on the importance of early childhood learning in relation to later learning pathways and outcomes
- an increased emphasis on the links between education, training and work
- a greater emphasis on lifelong learning with people taking different pathways at different times of their lives in order to obtain or upgrade their workplace and life skills, and their qualifications
- the increasing emergence of the private sector as a provider of learning opportunities
- an increasing attention to the quality of learning activities, performance and outcomes, particularly for identified population groups
- increased globalisation, including movements of people between countries for education and training purposes
- a growing need for nationally and internationally comparable measures of outcomes and performance.

Such developments are increasingly the focus of government policy initiatives, with associated performance measures. For example:

- The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) has established a range of key performance measures to monitor progress towards the *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*; the goals provide broad directions to assist schools and education authorities with developing the knowledge, understanding, skills and values that Australian students need for a productive and rewarding life.
- The vocational education and training sector has adopted six key performance measures formulated in the *National Vocational Education and Training Strategy 2004–2010* document which was endorsed by ANTA MINCO in November 2003.
- In the area of higher education, the Australian Government in conjunction with state and territory governments, has developed several initiatives to improve the Australian accreditation and quality assurance framework to promote international best practice.

## POLICY BACKGROUND

*continued*

- In 1993, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) set up the Review of Government Service Provision to establish the collection and publication of data that will enable ongoing comparisons of efficiency and effectiveness of Australian, and state and territory government services. These data are published in the annual *Report on Government Services*, of which school education, vocational education and training and children's services are important elements.

At the international level, one of the key turning points was the OECD Education Committee's 1996 meeting on *Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All*. This meeting and the report resulting from it have been influential in raising the profile of lifelong learning as a concern for educators worldwide. The report highlights issues which have led to a focus on lifelong learning, such as the widening reach and impact of global technologies, globalisation and trade liberalisation, the ageing of the population, increasing cultural diversity, and the changing nature of work. This report has been instrumental in promoting the development of data collections which facilitate international comparisons of performance and outcomes.

## INFORMATION NEEDS

From a statistical perspective, the complexity of the provision of learning and the pace of change present considerable challenges and measurement problems. Increasingly, those involved in the analysis and development of policy and delivery mechanisms are seeking high quality information which supports cross-sectoral, and cross-jurisdictional, analysis and performance measurement. The public also has a right to information which measures the 'health' of the national education and training system and describes the work and performance of the various jurisdictions and providers.

The present stock of information about learning (summarised later in the Plan) largely reflects the different approaches to the collection of information between and within the different education sectors. Statistics come from a diverse range of sources: policy and teaching agencies, private organisations, and the ABS. Within these bodies, statistics come from administrative sources (including school-based testing in areas such as literacy and numeracy), business surveys, household surveys, the population census, and macro-level sources such as public finance collections. These statistics also cover a wide range of topics, ranging from general contextual information through to finance and resourcing (both public and private sources), to participation, attainment, and social and economic outcomes. They also relate to individuals, organisations, and the broader community and society.

Education and training statistics have traditionally been organised largely according to sector, including schools, vocational education and training, and higher education. However, there is a growing need for a statistical infrastructure which can provide different perspectives on learning activities, at the level of the individual or provider, or with a geographic, sectoral or time focus.

## INFORMATION NEEDS

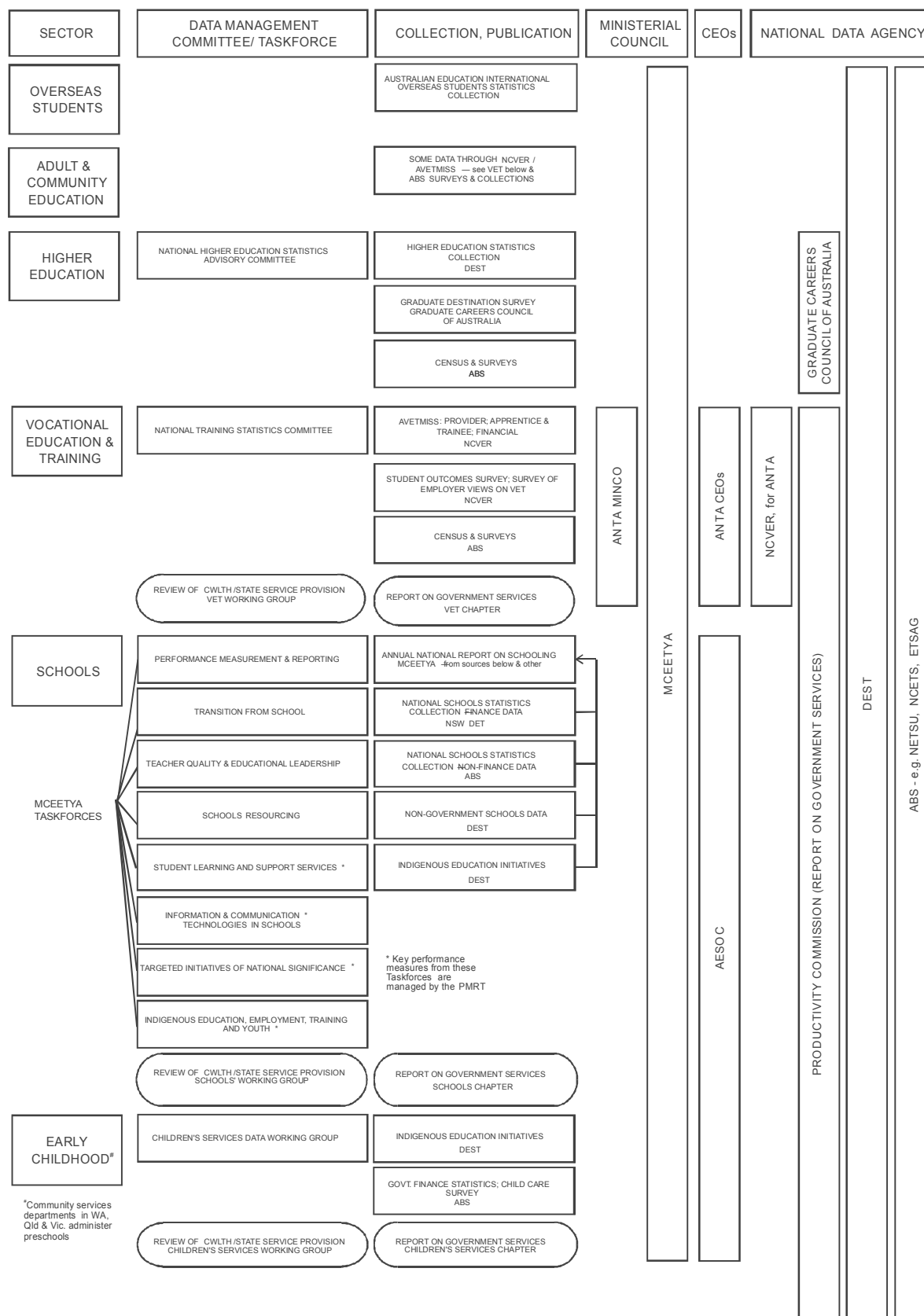
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With agreement and commitment across a range of agencies, the Plan will result in:

- a more comprehensive and integrated statistical view of learning
- increased relevance, comparability and quality of statistics
- better statistical relationships between education and training information and other social and economic data
- improved use of the available data.

The following diagram presents an overview of the responsibilities for major data collection activities within the education and training sectors in Australia.

## Overview of responsibilities for major national data collection activities within the Education and Training Sector



## CHAPTER 3

## HOW HAS THE PLAN BEEN DEVELOPED? .....

### THE NATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING STATISTICS UNIT

NETSU was established in mid 2002 to enhance coordination and leadership in the development of education and training statistics. It forms part of the ABS' National Centre for Education and Training Statistics and was set up under partnership arrangements between all state, territory and Australian government education and training departments, ANTA and the ABS. The Plan is central to NETSU's coordination and leadership role, and is an important means of enhancing the National Statistical Service.

In developing the Plan, NETSU built on a range of projects which it had undertaken since its inception. Brief descriptions of these projects follow.

#### *Framework for Education and Training Statistics*

In the past, statistics on education and training have been organised largely according to sector. However, there is a need to provide different perspectives on learning activities, such as on individual learning pathways, on a geographic basis or over time. NETSU, in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, developed *Measuring Learning in Australia — A Framework for Education and Training Statistics* (cat. no. 4213.0) which was published by ABS in early 2003. It is a suggested way of thinking about statistics on learning, and can be thought of as a broad level conceptual 'map', which defines the boundaries and content of these statistics. The Framework can be used to shape the way we think about issues and information needs.

#### *Comparability of data sources on education and training*

This project focused on the comparability of data items across key national data collections covering schools, vocational education and training and higher education, ABS education and training-related household surveys and the Census of Population and Housing, as well as sources of early childhood statistics. The aim was to report on any differences in definitions and classifications, and to prepare recommendations on how each collection could be improved to achieve greater comparability and consistency with existing ABS and international standards. The project concentrated primarily on student participation and attainment data items, as well as cross-classificatory variables common to all or most of the sources investigated.

#### *Stocktake of education and training statistics*

NETSU has undertaken a review covering each of the main education and training sectors to identify how well served they are in a statistical sense. In order to provide a consistent approach, these reviews used the matrix of 'elements' and 'levels' which is described in *A Framework for Education and Training Statistics*.

*15–24 year olds' participation and attainment*

Following endorsement by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) of a set of key performance measures for 15–24 year olds' participation and attainment, NETSU produced a report containing as much of the data as could reasonably be obtained from existing data sources, and a strategy for implementation of the proposed measures. Subsequent to this, NETSU has undertaken an investigation into ways in which the volatility of the attainment estimates can be reduced.

*Evaluation of financial statistics on education and training*

NETSU commissioned a consultancy, headed by Professor Gerald Burke (Centre for the Economics of Education and Training), to develop a financial statistics framework and to review current sources of data — their availability and consistency — in the light of the more general framework referred to above. The report contained ten recommendations with short, medium and long-term perspectives.

*Lifelong learning*

NETSU undertook preliminary research to identify issues related to lifelong learning. Particular emphasis was given to how these issues might be addressed statistically, and an issues paper was drafted. Among other things the paper drew together a number of interpretations of lifelong learning, identified policy issues, and also identified three main ways in which lifelong learning may be measured. A further extension of this work was some analysis of information about when people obtained their qualifications, which is available from the Survey of Education and Training. Initially this project investigated the probability of people of particular ages obtaining a qualification within given periods of time. Work is underway to identify the key questions and measures relating to 'pathways' in order to assess data availability in this area.

## OTHER REPORTS

The following reports have also been valuable in informing the development of the Plan:

- Richard Teese and Louise Watson 2002, *Mapping and Tracking - The potential of institutional data collections for monitoring student pathways through post-compulsory education and training*.
- Research and Evaluation Branch of the then Australian Government Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs 1999, *Review of Education and Training Statistics*.



## STAKEHOLDERS

The preparation of this Plan has involved considerable consultation, and the assistance of all who have contributed is gratefully acknowledged.

As major policy agencies, and/or as significant collectors of information about education and training, the key stakeholders in this Plan are:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
- Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST)
- state and territory departments responsible for education and training
- Australian National Training Authority (ANTA)
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)
- Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), its Secretariat, and the Taskforces, in particular the:
  - Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce (PMRT)
  - Transition from School Taskforce (TST)
  - Schools Resourcing Taskforce (SRT)
  - Teacher Quality and Education Leadership Taskforce (TQELT)
- Productivity Commission (because of its role in preparing the annual *Report on Government Services*).

Other bodies with a strong interest in the Plan include:

- Australian Council for Assessment, Curriculum and Accreditation
- Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)
- Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC)
- National Catholic Education Commission
- Independent Schools Council of Australia.

The Plan was endorsed by ANTA CEOs at their October 2003 meeting and by AESOC members in November 2003.

The Plan has also been strongly supported by the ABS' Education and Training Statistics Advisory Group, and the Australian Statistics Advisory Council.

## CHAPTER 4

### OUTLINE OF THE MAIN SOURCES OF NATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING INFORMATION .....

#### HIGHER EDUCATION

Information on publicly funded higher education institutions is collected by DEST. The advisory body for this work is the National Higher Education Statistics Advisory Committee.

A Graduate Destination Survey and a Course Experience Survey are conducted by the Graduate Careers Council of Australia.

An annual survey of applicants for undergraduate higher education places (otherwise known as the Unmet Demand Survey) is run by the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee.

There are two initiatives in the higher education sector that will impact on information needs. The most important of these is the Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS) which is being introduced by DEST in consultation with the higher education sector. This will be a web-based system which will include a range of modules designed to:

- provide students with timely, accessible and accurate information about course offerings, Commonwealth and state/territory contributions to course costs, loan details and institutional performance
- enable the efficient and effective management of Commonwealth student loans and higher education entitlements (including scholarships)
- provide institutions with timely, accessible and accurate information about institutional performance, payments and competitive funding initiatives
- provide one entry point for institutions to input statistical data, financial management reporting and programme management reporting.

As part of this process there will be a review of all data reporting requirements for higher education students. This review is a continuation of the current review being conducted by a joint committee of DEST and the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee.

HEIMS will be implemented progressively from 1 January 2005, with the first steps being the implementation of the Commonwealth Higher Education Student Support Number, a unique identifier for all higher education students in Commonwealth supported places, and the implementation of the student public and private portals.

Another major initiative trialled by DEST, in 2003, was the collection of data from private higher education institutions. There are over 70 non-government funded higher education institutions and the pilot study was to collect a limited set of enrolment data from these institutions with full implementation of the collection planned for 2004. This proposal is currently under review in light of the planned introduction of HEIMS in 2005.

## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Publicly funded training data are collected under arrangements with relevant training authorities by the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER) for the Australian National Training Authority. These data are collected in accordance with the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS). The collections are:

- AVETMISS Provider Collection
- AVETMISS Apprentice and Trainee Collection
- AVETMISS Financial Collection
- Student Outcomes Survey
- Survey of Employer Views on Vocational Education and Training.

Some adult and community education information is also collected through these arrangements.

The officials' committee for this work is the National Training Statistics Committee (NTSC).<sup>1</sup>

## SCHOOL EDUCATION

The MCEETYA Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce, liaising with the Schools Resourcing Taskforce, organises the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC).

Finance and non-finance information for non-government schools is collected by DEST under the *States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act 2000*. Similar information in respect of Government schools is collected by each state and territory education department.

The ABS compiles and publishes the non-finance data component of the NSSC, collecting the non-government schools data from DEST, and the Government schools data from each jurisdiction. The finance data component of the NSSC is compiled by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training.

Outcomes information, including data from the NSSC, is provided through the *Annual National Report on Schooling*, as the accountability document for education funding under the *States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act 2000*. The Annual National Report on Schooling is produced by MCEETYA.

DEST collects information on outcomes for Indigenous students under targeted initiatives funding with the states and territories, and non-government schools.

<sup>1</sup> Note: An annual national report of the Australian Vocational Education and Training System is published by ANTA — the report for 2002 consisting of three volumes, the third of which contains statistical data and reports on the key performance measures for the vocational education and training system.

## OVERSEAS STUDENTS

Information on overseas students studying in Australia is sourced from the Australian Education International Overseas Student Statistics Collection. For Commonwealth higher education institutions, data are collected from those institutions. For other providers, data are gathered from a register of courses and institutions and matched with data on student visa holders.

EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION

There is no systematic national collection of information in this area. In some jurisdictions where preschools are part of the education department, information is collected through departmental administrative, finance or human resource collections. In Victoria and Queensland, where preschools are administered by community services departments, information is collected from the regulatory departments.

The ABS collects data on:

- government expenditure on preschools at Commonwealth, state and territory levels as part of its Government Finance Statistics collection
- participation in preschool through the three-yearly Child Care Survey and five-yearly Census of Population and Housing.

On behalf of DEST, Data Analysis Australia collects information on preschool enrolments and outcomes for Indigenous students under targeted initiatives funding with the states and territories.

The Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision compiles, amongst other things, information about government funded preschools (including students and staff). The data are obtained from census collections conducted by the state and territory departments responsible for preschool services.

OTHER NATIONAL  
COLLECTIONS  
CONDUCTED BY THE ABS  
*Presently in the ABS work  
program*

Collections which are presently part of the ABS' core program (and fully funded by the ABS) are:

- the five-yearly Census of Population and Housing, which provides participation and attainment data, and which supports analyses for population groups and for small areas
- the annual household Survey of Education and Work, which provides snapshots of participation in education, educational attainment and education to work transition
- the four-yearly household Survey of Education and Training, which provides an in-depth picture of educational attainment and work-related training
- the four-yearly General Social Survey, and the six-yearly National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, which provide interlinkages between education and training and other areas of social concern
- the annual compilation of economic statistics which are relevant to education and training, in particular the Australian National Accounts, and the Public Finance data set.

Another survey in the ABS work program, jointly funded by DEST, DEWR and ABS, is the Survey of Adult Literacy and Lifeskills. This survey is to be conducted in 2006. The last survey on a similar topic (Survey of Aspects of Learning) was run in 1996.

*Presently in the ABS work  
program continued*

In addition to the above 'core' data sources, there are a range of other surveys which provide some education and training-related information (such as household expenditure on education from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey, and time spent on education-related activities from the Time Use Survey). Also, most surveys provide information on educational attainment to enable analysis of the relationship between it and the main survey topic (for example, how income varies with educational attainment).

In December 2002, the ABS released the first education and training indicators report, *Education and Training Indicators, Australia, 2002* (cat. no. 4230.0).

*Not presently in the ABS  
work program*

Another important survey which has been conducted periodically by the ABS is the employer-based Training Expenditure and Practices Survey. It provides information on characteristics of businesses and their provision of training to workers. Surveys have been conducted in 1993, 1996–97 and 2002, on a fully user funded basis. There are no plans to repeat this survey at this stage.

The advisory body for the ABS' work in this field is the Education and Training Statistics Advisory Group. In addition, the Australian Statistics Advisory Council provides broad guidance on issues and priorities across the whole of the ABS work program.

OTHER NATIONAL  
INFORMATION THROUGH  
THE PRODUCTIVITY  
COMMISSION

The Council of Australian Governments' Review of Government Service Provision collects and publishes data to enable ongoing comparisons of efficiency and effectiveness of Australian Government and state and territory government services. These data which are collected and analysed through the Productivity Commission, are published in the annual *Report on Government Services*. School education, vocational education and training and children's services are important elements of this report. The bulk of the information in the Report is derived from existing collections, but some additional information is obtained from jurisdictions.

### OVERVIEW

This section of the Plan summarises the agreed statistical priorities, and covers cross-cutting priorities, sector-specific priorities, and priorities for maintaining and further developing key data sources. In total 28 priorities are identified. The order in which they are discussed does not imply any ranking by importance.

The list of priorities reflects five key directions in education and training policy, planning, and information:

- the need for a stable program of key data sources
- the move to increase reporting on outcomes rather than inputs
- the interest in improving financial statistics and their transparency
- the emerging need for data across the sectors to be presented and analysed in a holistic manner to provide a perspective for important sub-populations, such as young people, Indigenous Australians, and people with a disability
- from the national statistical service perspective, maximising the use of existing collections, including administrative by-product datasets.

There is also an emerging interest in improved information to provide a better basis for well targeted, policy relevant research.

### CROSS-SECTORAL PRIORITIES

#### FURTHER DEVELOP EDUCATION AND TRAINING ECONOMIC STATISTICS [1]

There is considerable interest in improving economic statistics relating to education and training. For the purposes of policy development, review and research, information is needed on a consistent and coherent basis across education and training sectors, levels of government, and for public and private sector spending. The most pressing requirements are for increased transparency and more comprehensive and coherent financial information being publicly available. In particular:

- increased detail on government and non-government schools finances
- increased detail on higher education finances and expenditure on student assistance
- improved employer training expenditure measures
- improved coverage of early childhood education and adult and community education.

Interest has also been expressed in having an education and training satellite account (using the System of National Accounts).

CROSS-SECTORAL  
PRIORITIES *continued*IMPROVE STATISTICS ABOUT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING [2]

The *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* and the *ANTA National Vocational Education and Training Strategy 2004–2010* both identify improved outcomes for Indigenous people as key objectives. In *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2003*, the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Services identified deficiencies in education and training data on Indigenous peoples. To overcome these deficiencies and to assess progress towards the stated objectives, improvements are needed in the range and quality of information about Indigenous people's education and training.

The main requirements are to improve the quality of Indigenous identification in administrative systems and to maximise the use of existing collections. Particular effort is required:

- to improve the consistency and comparability of national reporting of preschool and school attendance
- to report Indigenous learning outcomes by geographic regions
- to provide state and territory breakdowns of Indigenous 15–24 year olds in transition from school to work
- to develop information on Indigenous participation in, and outcomes from, vocational education and training.

IMPROVE THE ALIGNMENT OF FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT STUDENT  
MEASURES ACROSS SECTORS [3]

A more consistent approach to the definition of full-time equivalents would improve the capacity to compare education and training performance across sectors and jurisdictions and is key to relating costs to outputs. A particular issue is the vocational education and training sector's approach of reporting by module or nominal hours rather than full-time equivalent as used in the schools and higher education sectors.

## INCREASE THE USE OF STATISTICAL STANDARDS [4]

In order to improve comparability across jurisdictions, sectors, and collections, and over time, it is important that standard approaches be adopted to the classification and reporting of key data items. The priorities are:

- to continue efforts to introduce standards wherever possible
- the development of a Dictionary of Standards for Education and Training Statistics which will provide a core set of data definitions, classifications and standards about education and training statistics.

## INCREASE THE ANALYSIS OF DATA [5]

As outlined previously, there is a considerable amount of education and training-related information available from a wide range of sources. It is important to promote access to, and use of, this information for analysis and research and to inform decision making.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC  
PRIORITIES*Early childhood*

## IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION INFORMATION [6]

Early childhood education provides a foundation for subsequent educational and skills development. The early childhood area of statistics is not well served statistically. There are major data deficiencies, particularly in the following areas:

- gaps in the available data, particularly relating to educational context, participants, non-participants, resources and outcomes
- inconsistent use of statistical standards and definitions, resulting in a lack of comparability between sources
- lack of national agreement on early childhood indicators.

*Schools*COMPLETE IMPLEMENTATION AND MAINTAIN SCHOOLS SECTOR KEY  
PERFORMANCE MEASURES [7]<sup>2</sup>

The MCEETYA Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce (PMRT) is developing a comprehensive set of key performance measures, which are to be comparable across jurisdictions and over time, and which can be reported for a range of sub-populations. Challenges in this task include implementation of standard definitions and practices in the collection of a range of student background characteristics to enable expanded reporting of student outcomes. Improvements are also being sought in the ongoing management of national data on schooling.

IMPROVE INFORMATION REGARDING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE  
SCHOOLS SECTOR TEACHING WORKFORCE, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE  
[8]

A key issue for governments and the wider community is the extent to which Australia is facing significant shortages of primary and secondary teachers. Improved information is required on the demand and supply of teachers, characteristics of the teaching workforce and recruitment practices. Work to improve data in this area is being progressed through the MCEETYA Teacher Quality and Education Leadership Taskforce (TQELT).

REVIEW AND RATIONALISE SCHOOLS SECTOR REPORTING AND  
DISSEMINATION OF DATA [9]

Currently there is some overlap and duplication of effort involved in the provision of data by the schools sector. There is scope for a more coordinated approach in reporting and dissemination of data and timing of release of publications.

In particular, the requirements of the Review of Government Service Provision and the Annual National Report on Schooling should be better aligned, and improved consistency is sought between the financial data presented in the two reports.

<sup>2</sup> Some information priorities within the key performance measures are also listed separately as significant needs.



*Post-compulsory  
education pathways<sup>3</sup>*

IMPROVE INFORMATION ON PARTICIPATION AND ATTAINMENT OF  
15–24 YEAR OLDS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING [10]

These measures have been agreed as high priorities by MCEETYA, for reporting in the Annual National Report on Schooling. The ABS has completed a substantial investigation into ways in which the quality of the endorsed attainment measures might be improved.

IMPROVE INFORMATION ON LIFELONG LEARNING [11]

There is a need to develop information on the different pathways that people take at different times of their lives in order to obtain or upgrade their workplace and life skills, and their qualifications. An investigation into possible statistical measures of lifelong learning is required to take this development forward.

*Vocational education and  
training*

IMPROVE INFORMATION ON SELECTED VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING TOPICS [12–18]:

Seven priorities have been identified. They are supported by the National Training Statistics Committee (NTSC) which has agreed to consider them in the light of work underway on the key performance measures of the new national VET strategy 2004–2010 and the national VET statistics plan.

Specifically there is a need for improved information on:

- the provision of vocational education and training services by private providers, in addition to the characteristics of students who consume them, particularly given the limitations on government funding and increasing provision of vocational education and training activities by organisations which do not receive public funds [12]
- students' pathways both within the vocational education and training sector, and between vocational education and training and other sectors [13]
- characteristics of the vocational education and training workforce, both public and private [14]
- vocational education and training undertaken in schools [15]
- the characteristics of non-participants in vocational education and training (unmet demand) [16]
- the longer term outcomes of vocational education and training participants and module non-completers [17]
- Indigenous participation in vocational education and training [18].

*Higher education*

IMPROVE INFORMATION ON SELECTED HIGHER EDUCATION TOPICS  
[19–20]:

As discussed in Chapter Four, two initiatives in the higher education sector will impact on information needs:

- in 2003, DEST piloted the collection of a limited set of enrolment information from over 70 non-government funded higher education institutions.[19]
- the implementation of the Higher Education Information Management System (HEIMS)[20] from 2005 will provide:
  - information for students on course offerings, government contributions to course costs, loan details and institutional performance

<sup>3</sup> Pathways information needs to also appear in the vocational education and training and higher education sections below.

*Higher education  
continued*

- information on Commonwealth student loans and higher education entitlements (including scholarships)
- information about institutional performance, payments and competitive funding initiatives
- a single entry point for the input of statistical data, financial management reporting, and programme management reporting.

MAINTAINING AND  
FURTHER DEVELOPING  
KEY DATA SOURCES

MAINTAIN AND FURTHER IMPROVE THE QUALITY (WHERE NEEDED) OF  
THE KEY SECTORAL COLLECTIONS [21]

- National Schools Statistics Collection (ABS/MCEETYA)
- AVETMISS Provider Collection, AVETMISS Apprentice and Trainee Collection, AVETMISS Financial Collection, NCVER Student Outcomes Survey and NCVER Survey of Employer Views on VET (ANTA/NCVER)
- Higher Education collections (DEST) and Graduate Destination Survey (Graduate Careers Council of Australia)
- the Overseas Students Statistics Collection (DEST).

CONTINUE THE PROGRAMME FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT  
ASSESSMENT (PISA) [22]

PISA assesses the reading, mathematics and science literacy of 15-year-old students in approximately 30 OECD countries. The second cycle of assessment, conducted in 2003, included an assessment of problem-solving skills in addition to the three main domains. Addition of assessment of information and communications technology literacy is envisaged for 2006 (DEST/states and territories).

CONTINUE THE TRENDS IN INTERNATIONAL MATHEMATICS AND  
SCIENCE STUDY (TIMSS) [23]

TIMSS tests achievement in mathematics and science in a sample of school students in approximately 45 participating countries (Australian Council for Educational Research/DEST/states and territories).

MAINTAIN THE LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF AUSTRALIAN YOUTH [24]

The Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth is the only source of longitudinal data about young peoples' involvement with education, training and the labour market (DEST, through ACER).

IMPLEMENT GROWING UP IN AUSTRALIA [25]

Growing Up in Australia (the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children) is managed by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) and was officially launched in February 2004. It includes education components to provide longitudinal data on early childhood and school education outcomes (FaCS through the Australian Institute of Family Studies).

MAINTAINING AND  
FURTHER DEVELOPING  
KEY DATA SOURCES

*continued*

ENSURE A SUITE OF ABS STATISTICAL COLLECTIONS WHICH PROVIDES  
INFORMATION ABOUT EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND REFLECTS  
CONTEMPORARY POLICY REQUIREMENTS [26–28]

As outlined in Chapter Four, the following surveys are presently in the ABS' core program[26]:

- the five-yearly Census of Population and Housing
- the annual household Survey of Education and Work
- the four-yearly household Survey of Education and Training
- the four-yearly General Social Survey, and six-yearly National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
- the regular compilation of economic statistics which are relevant to education and training, in particular the Australian National Accounts and the Public Finance data set.

Another survey in the ABS work program, as mentioned in Chapter 4, is the 2006 Survey of Adult Literacy and Lifeskills. There is interest in such a survey about every ten years. [27]

A range of other surveys provide some education and training-related information and most ABS household surveys include an educational attainment variable.

Chapter 4 also noted that a repeat of the 2001–02 employer Training Expenditure and Practices Survey is not presently in the program. The conduct of this survey is dependent on user priorities and funding being available. [28]

## ASSESSMENT OF PRIORITIES IN TERMS OF THE CURRENT STATE OF ACTIVITY .....

The 28 priority areas, from Chapter 5 Agreed Priorities, have been divided into three groups, based on an assessment of the current state of activity with each priority. The three groups are:

*Under control:* Where a lead agency is identified and action is already underway.

*Some development needed:* Some work is occurring, but there is a need for greater input, or input to a different component. In general, a lead agency has work underway, but wider input to solutions, redirection of effort, or increased resources are still needed.

*Significant work needed:* There is a need to develop possible actions to address identified gaps. Either or both of the following situations exist:

- a lead agency may not have been agreed or resources may not have been allocated
- the issue is complex and there is substantial development work necessary to identify gaps and options to address them, and to gain agreement to action.

The following tables set forth the main priorities. In some cases, the tables may be quite complex as several priorities are included in the one table. Each table has the same layout, that is, it is divided into three columns. The first column outlines improvements needed to the existing state-of-play to advance the priority within the next three years. The second column identifies the key agency or task force which has taken the running on that priority or that has agreed to progress the priority within the period. The third column discusses current actions or the proposed future actions for that priority.

The Plan is not a contract, rather it is an agreement between the parties. It will be reviewed three yearly (with the next major review in 2006). Annual updates of progress towards the agreed priorities in the plan will be released on the ABS web site.

## 6.1 UNDER CONTROL

### IMPROVE STATISTICS ABOUT INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' EDUCATION AND TRAINING [2]

*Where do we want to be in three years?*

*Key agency/task force*

*Action in train or proposed*

To have in place the set of information which is necessary for policy development and measuring education and training related program outcomes, in particular:

- |  |                                       |   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maximising the use of existing collections</li> </ul>   | ABS                                   | The ABS will identify sources of information on Indigenous people's education and training participation and attainment, including the ABS' NATSISS and other relevant collections, through the Directory of Education and Training Statistics.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reporting key indicators through the annual Indigenous disadvantage report of the COAG Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision</li> </ul> | ABS, PMRT and Productivity Commission | The ABS will continue to liaise with the COAG Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, the COAG School Education Working Group (SEWG) and the PMRT sub-committees, to support the development of key indicators.  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use of the nationally agreed Indigenous status identifier in all education and training administrative systems</li> </ul>   | ABS                                   | <p>Although MCEETYA agreed to use the ABS' Indigenous identifier in the schools sector, this has still not been implemented in some jurisdictions. The Chair of the PMRT wrote on this issue to CEOs of each state/territory department, and the federal government (for the non-government sector) in August 2002. This issue is being pursued through a subgroup of the Taskforce.</p> <p>The ABS is working with all education and training sectors to improve the quality of Indigenous identification in appropriate systems. This includes the development of promotional materials — brochures, flyers, posters — to encourage quality collection of the Indigenous identifier on enrolment and other forms. This material is aimed at a variety of audiences — such as institution staff, students, parents and data coding officers.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improved national reporting of school attendance data</li> </ul>  | PMRT                                  | This is managed through the DEST contracts with states and territories. The Productivity Commission is concerned that the data does not meet the needs of the <i>Report on Government Services</i> . Possible action would need to be discussed and developed through stakeholder agreement. The PMRT is considering this item.   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improved information on Indigenous participation in VET [18]</li> </ul>   | NCVER                                 | In 2004, the NCVER will conduct a Survey of Indigenous Vocational Education and Training Students. This survey aims to improve understanding of a broad range of outcomes from VET participation by Indigenous people i.e., to cast light on the question: "What individual, community and economic benefits arise from participation in VET by Indigenous people?"   |

**UNDER CONTROL** *continued***COMPLETE IMPLEMENTATION AND MAINTAIN SCHOOLS SECTOR KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES [7]**

<i>Where do we want to be in three years?</i>	<i>Key agency/task force</i>	<i>Action in train or proposed</i>
<p>To have in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a comprehensive set of key performance measures for the <i>National Goals of Schooling</i>, which are comparable across jurisdictions, over time, and which can be reported for a range of sub-populations</li> </ul>	PMRT	<p>The PMRT is developing a comprehensive set of key performance measures. Taskforce work covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>key performance measures— developing and overseeing implementation of national key performance measures in the priority areas of the <i>National Goals for Schooling</i></li> <li>nationally consistent definitions — developing and overseeing implementation of agreed definitions for the purposes of national data collection and reporting</li> <li>data collection and consistency — developing, implementing and overseeing rigorous processes and structures to enable the collection, production, storage, dissemination, quality assurance and reporting of national data on schooling</li> <li>reporting — publishing the <i>Annual National Report on Schooling in Australia</i>.</li> </ul> <p>The PMRT Secretariat advises that there has been considerable progress in implementing the set of performance measures and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>literacy and numeracy are reported annually for Years 3, 5 and 7; and 15 year olds' performance will utilise PISA information</li> <li>that there will be national three-yearly sample assessment cycles for science, civics and citizenship education, and information and communication technology; with science commencing in 2003, civics and citizenship education in 2004, and information and communication technology in 2005.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>processes for ongoing management of data, analysis, standards and consistency.</li> </ul>	PMRT and Productivity Commission	<p>This is to be reviewed by one of the Taskforce's subgroups. PMRT and the COAG School Education Working Group will continue to liaise to ensure common, consistent reporting of schools sector KPMs.</p>

**IMPROVE INFORMATION REGARDING CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOLS SECTOR TEACHING WORKFORCE, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE [8]**

<i>Where do we want to be in three years?</i>	<i>Key agency/task force</i>	<i>Action in train or proposed</i>
<p>To have improved data on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recruitment difficulties</li> <li>the teaching workforce — particularly teacher specialisations</li> <li>the teaching pool — the size of the pool of people available to teach on a permanent, contract or relief/casual basis but who are not teaching or are under-utilised</li> <li>inflows and outflows of teachers to the teaching labour force</li> <li>recruitment practices of school systems and demand-supply adjustment mechanisms.</li> </ul>	TQELT	<p>The MCEETYA TQELT provides advice on issues around the supply and demand for teachers. The Taskforce conducted a survey in 2002 to enable a more detailed assessment than has been possible in the past of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demand for and supply of teachers</li> <li>characteristics of the current teaching workforce</li> <li>likely future demand for teachers — in terms of overall numbers — at the secondary level, by teaching specialisations or key learning areas</li> <li>factors that attracted teachers to their profession, and factors that would cause them to consider remaining in their profession.</li> </ul> <p>A report based on this survey has been released and is available on the MCEETYA web site (<i>Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia</i>). This survey will be repeated in 2004.</p>

**UNDER CONTROL** *continued* .....

## IMPROVE INFORMATION ON PARTICIPATION AND ATTAINMENT OF 15-24 YEAR-OLDS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING [10]

.....

**UNDER CONTROL** *continued***IMPROVE INFORMATION ON VET UNDERTAKEN IN SCHOOLS [15]**

<i>Where do we want to be in three years?</i>	<i>Key agency/task force</i>	<i>Action in train or proposed</i>
To have consistent information across jurisdictions on VET activities through the school system.	PMRT and the TST with NCVER	<p>The PMRT and the TST have developed key performance measures for VET in schools. NCVER has been investigating options for collecting data on a consistent basis across jurisdictions (which may involve blending data from the AVETMISS and Boards of Studies).</p> <p>The key performance measures agreed by Ministers at the July 2003 MCEETYA meeting were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in relation to participation: school students undertaking VET (with New Apprenticeships and Traineeships disaggregated) as part of their senior secondary school certificate in a calendar year as a proportion of all school students undertaking a senior secondary school certificate in that year</li> <li>in relation to attainment: school students enrolled in a senior secondary school certificate in a calendar year who have completed at least one VET unit of competency/module as a proportion of all school students undertaking a senior secondary school certificate in that year.</li> </ul> <p>At the July 2003 meeting, MCEETYA endorsed an ANTA MINCO recommendation that a single national source of common data be established for measuring, collecting and reporting in relation to VET in schools activity, and that a cross-sectoral approach to the collection and reporting of data will be required involving NCVER, Boards of Studies, state training authorities and government and non-government school sectors.</p>

**IMPROVE INFORMATION ON ENROLMENTS IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS [19]**

<i>Where do we want to be in three years?</i>	<i>Key agency/task force</i>	<i>Action in train or proposed</i>
To have consistent information on enrolments in the more than 70 private higher education institutions.	DEST	In 2003, DEST piloted the collection of a limited set of enrolment information from non-government funded higher education institutions, with full introduction of the collection in the future.



**UNDER CONTROL** *continued***MAINTAIN AND FURTHER DEVELOP KEY DATA SOURCES***Where do we want to be in three years?**Key agency/task force**Action in train or proposed*

To have maintained and further improved the quality (where needed) of the key sectoral collections:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NSSC [21]</li> </ul>	ABS and MCEETYA	This collection has well established processes and methodology. However, it is important to review collection activity from time to time to ensure its relevance, and to attempt to improve quality on an ongoing basis without disrupting the key time series.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AVETMISS Provider Collection, AVETMISS Apprentice and Trainee Collection, AVETMISS Financial Collection, NCVER Student Outcomes Survey and NCVER Survey of Employer Views on VET [21]</li> </ul>	ANTA and NCVER	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overseas Students Statistical Collection [21]</li> </ul>	DEST	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher Education collections and Graduate Destination Survey and Course Experience Survey [21].</li> </ul>	DEST, AVCC and GCCA	All of these collections are currently under review following the announcement of the introduction of the HEIMS [20]. The effective operation of the new web-based system will require all existing and new students accessing federally supported places or Commonwealth student loans from 1 January 2005 to be issued with a Commonwealth Higher Education Student Support Number. This number will be limited in its use and protected under federal privacy legislation.
Continue PISA [22].	ACER, DEST and state and territory education departments	<p>The second cycle of assessment is progressing. PISA 2003 includes an assessment of problem-solving skills in addition to the three main domains, and the Australian 2003 sample was doubled to provide the next cohort for LSAY.</p> <p>Addition of assessment for information and communications technology literacy is envisaged for 2006.</p>
Continue TIMSS [23].	ACER, DEST and state and territory education departments	This collection has well established processes and methodology. No action is proposed.
Continue LSAY [24].	ACER and DEST	This collection has well established processes and methodology. No action is proposed.
<p>To have maintained the suite of ABS statistical collections that provide information about education and training reflecting contemporary user requirements. Presently in the core program:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the five-yearly Census of Population and Housing [26]</li> <li>SEW [26]</li> <li>the four-yearly household SET [26]</li> <li>the four-yearly GSS (and the six-yearly NATSISS) [26]</li> <li>the regular compilation of economic statistics which are relevant to education and training, in particular the Australian National Accounts and the Public Finance data set [26].</li> </ul>	ABS	<p>These collections will be reviewed periodically to ensure their relevance.</p> <p>Presently two surveys are not in the core program. Their conduct is dependent on relative user priorities and funding becoming available. They are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the periodic employer TEPS [28] (action on this survey is covered in Table 6.3)</li> <li>the Survey of Adult Literacy and Lifeskills [27]. ABS is proposing to run the survey in 2006, with funding support from DEST and DEWR.</li> </ul>
To have results from the Growing Up in Australia study available for research and analysis [25].	DEST and ABS (working with FaCS)	The Growing Up in Australia study is managed by FaCS and was launched in February 2004. It includes education components to provide longitudinal data on early childhood education outcomes. Results from the Wave 1 collection are expected to be available in 2005.

**UNDER CONTROL** *continued*

## COLLECT INFORMATION FOR THE SURVEY OF ADULT LITERACY AND LIFESKILLS [27]

<i>Where do we want to be in three years?</i>	<i>Key agency/task force</i>	<i>Action in train or proposed</i>
To have come to some arrangement about the conduct of another survey in 2006–07.	ABS, DEST and ANTA	<p>The ABS conducted a Survey of Aspects of Literacy in 1996 as part of the International Adult Literacy Survey, which was coordinated by Statistics Canada and the OECD. This survey was a major success and the results have been of great importance across a wide range of applications ever since. However, they are becoming dated.</p> <p>The review of household surveys by the ABS in 1999 concluded that this survey should be conducted about every eight to ten years, and there is considerable, and growing, support for a repeat measurement.</p> <p>Following discussions with possible funding partners, ABS is proposing to run the survey in 2006 with funding support from DEST and DEWR.</p>

## 6.2 SOME DEVELOPMENT NEEDED

### FURTHER DEVELOP EDUCATION AND TRAINING ECONOMIC STATISTICS [1]

Where do we want to be in three years?

Key agency/task force

Action in train or proposed

To have improved economic/financial statistics on education and training, reflected in:

ABS

#### Cross-sectoral work

- increased transparency of collection and reporting of financial information
- more comprehensive, coherent information being publicly available
- expenditure data linked to measures of output in a comparable manner across sectors
- use of the most appropriate price deflators for measures presented in real terms.

The ABS commissioned a report, *An evaluation of education and training financial statistics* (October 2001), prepared by a team of consultants headed by Professor Gerald Burke, Centre for the Economics of Education and Training. This report developed a framework for education and training financial statistics, reviewed Australian education and training financial statistics against the framework, and examined issues associated with collecting and comparing financial data. The ABS has established a project to further investigate the issues raised in the report, and where possible, implement its recommendations.

SRT

#### Schools

The MCEETYA SRT is addressing the following financial information needs for the schools sector, through the 'Resourcing the National Goals' project. This project, as specified in the July 2003 workplan, involves an analysis of selected cost drivers:

- Student-related — some groups of students impose a higher than average cost burden on a school system. Costs will be calculated for equity programs/interventions that are successful in raising the learning outcomes of these students to specified levels.
- School-related — the location and size of a school can have a significant impact on the cost of schooling. Existing subsidies and programs for all school-related factors will be calculated.
- Curriculum-related — the demands of an expanding curriculum and the breadth of the National Goals of Schooling means that schools are required to achieve results (and be measured for their ability to deliver) across a wider range of learning outcomes. This stage of the project will also investigate the resources and costs associated with the delivery of selected additional curriculum programs and estimate total and recurrent unit costs for nationwide delivery.

**SOME DEVELOPMENT NEEDED** *continued***INCREASE THE USE OF STATISTICAL STANDARDS [4]**

<i>Where do we want to be in three years?</i>	<i>Key agency/task force</i>	<i>Action in train or proposed</i>
<p>To have all agencies using the agreed definitions and standards for national data collection activities, facilitated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>detailed standards for variables which use the ASCED, maintained on the ABS web site.</li> <li>an education and training statistics data dictionary which incorporates national data standards promulgated by the ABS wherever they are relevant.</li> </ul>	ABS, DEST and ANTA	<p>For the schools sector, the July 2002 meeting of MCEETYA endorsed the use of ABS standards for country of birth, main language other than English spoken at home, and educational attainment.</p> <p>At the December 2002 NETSU Management Board meeting it was agreed that a basic Dictionary of Standards for Education and Training Statistics should be developed. This dictionary will provide a core set of data definitions, classifications and standards about education and training statistics. Version 1 of the Dictionary is under development by NETSU. It contains 19 data elements that include the following standards: demographic, cultural and language, education, and geographic location.</p>
<p>To have improved information about the education and training of people in regional Australia to support national and jurisdictional planning, policy development and performance measurement of programs.</p> <p>Priority areas identified are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the need to adopt a common cross-sectoral approach to classification of spatial data</li> <li>improved data for socioeconomic status, disability, and cultural and language diversity.</li> </ul>		NETSU will liaise with the ABS' Rural and Regional Statistics National Centre on options to improve data.

**INCREASE THE ANALYSIS OF DATA [5]**

<i>Where do we want to be in three years?</i>	<i>Key agency/task force</i>	<i>Action in train or proposed</i>
To have improved access to a wide range of education and training related data to facilitate analysis and research and to inform decision making.	ABS, DEST and ANTA	ABS is increasing access to microdata through a range of modes, such as its Remote Access Data Laboratory. It is also developing, in collaboration with other interested agencies, a National Data Network. This will create a distributed library of data holdings relevant to policy analysis and research.

**SOME DEVELOPMENT NEEDED** *continued***IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION STATISTICS [6]***Where do we want to be in three years?**Key agency/task force**Action in train or proposed*

To have progressed in developing and implementing processes which provide sufficient national information to address:

- the extent to which early childhood education brings about a lasting boost to later education and life outcomes
- national and international requirements for reporting comparisons
- complications in measurement which arise because of the interaction between educational activity and child care within long day care centres.

DEST and ABS with FaCS

The ABS collects data on participation in preschool through the three-yearly Child Care Survey and the five-yearly Census of Population and Housing. With both these collections, the ABS is investigating strategies to improve estimates of participation in preschool.

DEST collects information in the Indigenous Preschools Census on preschool enrolments and outcomes for Indigenous students under targeted initiatives funding with the states and territories. An expansion in data coverage is proposed for this collection to include more data on non-Indigenous children.

Two more major sources are being developed in joint projects between agencies:

- National Minimum Data Set for children's services — the Children's Services Data Working Group, which consists of representatives of the relevant Australian Government and state and territory departments, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the ABS, is developing a core set of data items for defining and testing of a National Minimum Data Set for children's services. It is anticipated that this work will assist in improving data definition and data collection processes.
- Growing Up in Australia study — work on the educational component of the Growing Up in Australia study is being progressed through FaCS. In particular, information is required on the educational content of preschool and child care programs. DEST and ABS will liaise with FaCS as necessary on this and other relevant aspects of the study.

**SOME DEVELOPMENT NEEDED** *continued***REVIEW AND RATIONALISE SCHOOLS SECTOR REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION OF DATA [9]***Where do we want to be in three years?**Key agency/task force**Action in train or proposed*

To have:

- removed overlap and duplication of effort involved in school sector provision of data for national reporting responsibilities
- a more consolidated and effective approach in both publication and dissemination of reports.

Data and Reporting subgroup of the PMRT with ABS

The ABS, in consultation with the COAG School Education Working Group Secretariat, the MCEETYA Secretariat, and the PMRT Secretariat, prepared in April 2003 an issues paper on rationalisation of school sector reporting for consideration by the PMRT Data and Reporting subgroup.

This would include information requirements for the Review of Government Service Provision.

The paper was also copied to the other relevant committees:

- Schools Resourcing Taskforce
- NETSU Management Board.

The COAG School Education Working Group is liaising with the relevant bodies to address the key concern: issues in consistency of financial data between the *Annual National Report on Schooling* and the *Report on Government Services*.

## 6.3 SIGNIFICANT WORK NEEDED

### IMPROVE THE ALIGNMENT OF FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT STUDENT MEASURES ACROSS SECTORS [3]

*Where do we want to be in three years?*

*Key agency/task force*

*Action in train or proposed*

To have the capacity to compare full-time equivalence across sectors.

NTSC with ABS and ANTA

The NETSU Management Board Chair canvassed initial views at the September 2002 ANTA CEOs meeting.

Cross-sectoral analysis would benefit from a more consistent approach to the definition of full-time equivalence. This is also essential for accurately relating costs to outputs. A particular issue is the VET sector reporting by module or nominal hours rather than full-time equivalent.

The issue has been referred to the NTSC, who agreed in July 2003 that the ABS, ANTA and NCVER will continue to work together on the development of a suitable measure.

### IMPROVE INFORMATION ON LIFELONG LEARNING [11]

*Where do we want to be in three years?*

*Key agency/task force*

*Action in train or proposed*

To have developed information on different pathways that people take at different times in their lives in order to obtain or upgrade their workplace and life skills and their qualifications.

DEST and ABS

DEST has developed a discussion paper on lifelong learning, including information gaps and possible performance monitoring measures.

Using DEST work, the ANTA *National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training* (1998–2003) and the ANTA *National Marketing Strategy for Skills and Lifelong Learning* (December 1999), the ABS has undertaken some early work to identify the key questions of interest in relation to the desired outcomes of lifelong learning and to translate these into measures of lifelong learning.

As part of this project the ABS has undertaken some exploratory pathways analysis of SET data to see what use can be made of the 'timestamped' information about particular events, such as when the respondent left school, and when they obtained any qualifications. Initially, results from this analysis are expected to be available as a working paper.

**SIGNIFICANT WORK NEEDED** *continued***COLLECT INFORMATION ON PRIVATELY FUNDED PROVISION OF VET SERVICES DELIVERED BY PRIVATE PROVIDERS [12]**

<i>Where do we want to be in three years?</i>	<i>Key agency/task force</i>	<i>Action in train or proposed</i>
<p>To have improved information on privately funded provision of VET services delivered by private providers, to assist policy development and planning.</p> <p>The lack of information regarding the delivery of VET by private providers is an area of considerable concern. Given the current climate of increasing restriction of government funding, and the increasing number of private providers, the lack of data within this area is of increasing significance. Given the absence of legislation requiring private providers to report this information, little is currently known about the private organisations providing VET, characteristics of students undertaking VET through the private sector, their activities, and their outcomes, and therefore, about total VET expenditure.</p>	NTSC	<p>The NTSC is examining options to progress data collection in this area.</p> <p>Queensland Department of Education and Training has undertaken a survey of private training providers, in partnership with the Australian Council of Private Education and Training. This survey – the Performance Measures in Private Education and Training Survey – was conducted in late 2002 and a report on the findings has been prepared.</p> <p>The NTSC and NCVER are undertaking consultations with key stakeholders regarding a proposal to capture data on all nationally recognised training, and also discussing the scope for other means of capturing total VET effort.</p>

**IMPROVE INFORMATION ON STUDENTS' PATHWAYS BOTH WITHIN THE VET SECTOR, AND BETWEEN VET AND OTHER SECTORS [13]**

<i>Where do we want to be in three years?</i>	<i>Key agency/task force</i>	<i>Action in train or proposed</i>
<p>To have improved information on students' pathways to assist policy and planning development.</p>	NTSC	<p>While the AVETMISS does include provision for each student to be given an identifying number, this item does not uniquely identify students across institutions, nor years, and it is therefore not possible to use this information to track students within the VET system. Improving the methods of tracking students through VET would be an important step towards a more comprehensive picture within Australia. At a broader level, there is considerable interest in a picture of pathways across school, vocational education and training, higher education and adult and community education.</p> <p>In the absence of cross-sectoral identifiers, and/or improvement within sectors of the quality identifiers (and, importantly, a preparedness to use such identifiers as a statistical linking tool), such a picture could only be generated through a coordinated approach to 'student source/destination' data items in appropriate administrative collections, or through a population survey.</p> <p>A paper was presented to NTSC in March 2004 which examined the ANTA National Project underway in Tasmania, the higher education identifier announced in the Commonwealth Budget, and international experience.</p>



**SIGNIFICANT WORK NEEDED** *continued***IMPROVE INFORMATION ON CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VET WORKFORCE, BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE [14]**

<i>Where do we want to be in three years?</i>	<i>Key agency/task force</i>	<i>Action in train or proposed</i>
To have improved data on the number and characteristics of the VET workforce, both public and private.	NTSC with NCVET	NCVET has advised the NTSC of research in this area commissioned through the National Research and Evaluation Committee.  NCVET undertook an initial study of the VET workforce in 2002, drawing on information provided from jurisdictions. A final report will be available in 2004. It is expected to highlight the lack of consistent information across jurisdictions.

**IMPROVE INFORMATION ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF NON-PARTICIPANTS IN VET (UNMET DEMAND) [16]**

<i>Where do we want to be in three years?</i>	<i>Key agency/task force</i>	<i>Action in train or proposed</i>
To have a better understanding of the extent of, and reasons for, unmet demand for VET to assist planning and policy development. In this context it will be important to identify 'real' unmet demand as opposed to just 'non-participation'.	NTSC, NCVET and ANTA	While recent years have seen a vast improvement in the statistics available about the motivation of course and module completers, data on non-participants is still sparse.  NCVET and ANTA are working together to more closely examine data from the ABS SEW.

**IMPROVE INFORMATION ON THE LONGER TERM OUTCOMES OF VET PARTICIPANTS AND MODULE NON-COMPLETERS [17]**

<i>Where do we want to be in three years?</i>	<i>Key agency/task force</i>	<i>Action in train or proposed</i>
To have improved information on the outcomes of VET participants and module non-completers. In particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While the Student Outcomes Survey provides information on short term outcomes, little is known about the longer term outcomes for VET participants, including generic skills attained, long-term career progression effects, the effects of quality of teaching and outcomes for module non-completers.</li> <li>In addition, there is some concern regarding the quality of Apprentice and Traineeship completions data from the AVETMISS.</li> </ul>	NTSC and NCVET	The longer term outcomes of student participation were discussed at the July 2003 NTSC meeting with a proposal for a longitudinal survey receiving general support. In order to advance this matter further, it was agreed that Victoria would forward some developmental work done on a longitudinal survey to NCVET for consideration.  NCVET undertook a Survey of Expired Contracts in 2002 to investigate the extent of under reporting of apprenticeship and traineeship contracts that have expired without a final status being known, with the possibility of developing a model that adjusts for this in future reporting. The final report from this survey was submitted to the NTSC in March 2003. The main finding was that there has been a decline in under reporting of completions and non-completions (from around 8%–9% in 1999 to about 5%–6% in 2001).

**SIGNIFICANT WORK NEEDED** *continued*

## UPDATE INFORMATION ON TRAINING EXPENDITURE AND PRACTICES[28]

<i>Where do we want to be in three years?</i>	<i>Key agency/task force</i>	<i>Action in train or proposed</i>
To have reached agreement on the conduct and funding of any future employer based Training Expenditure and Practices Survey (TEPS).	ANTA and ABS	A TEPS survey was conducted in respect of 2001–02, following on from previous surveys in 1993 and 1996–97. Conducted primarily to provide the VET community with information on characteristics of businesses and their provision of training to workers (which is an important part of the <i>Framework of Education and Training Statistics</i> ), this survey is also potentially useful as a source of education and training financial statistics. The 2001–02 survey results were released by the ABS in April 2003 ( <i>Employer Training Expenditure and Practices, Australia</i> (cat. no. 6362.0)). The conduct of a future survey is dependent on user priorities and funding being available.

## ABBREVIATIONS .....

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AESOC	Australian Education Systems Officials Committee
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ANTA MINCO	Australian National Training Authority Ministerial Council
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ASCED	Australian Standard Classification of Education
AVCC	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
AVETMISS	Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard
CEOs	Chief Executive Officers
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
DEST	Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training
ETSAG	Education and Training Statistics Advisory Group
FaCS	Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services
GCCA	Graduate Careers Council of Australia
GSS	General Social Survey
HEIMS	Higher Education Information Management System
LSAY	Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NETSU	National Education and Training Statistics Unit
NSSC	National Schools Statistics Collection
NSW	New South Wales
NTSC	National Training Statistics Committee
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PMRT	Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce
Qld	Queensland
SET	Survey of Education and Training
SEW	Survey of Education and Work
SEWG	School Education Working Group
SRT	Schools Resourcing Taskforce
TEPS	Training Expenditure and Practices Survey
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TQELT	Teacher Quality and Education Leadership Taskforce
TST	Transition from School Taskforce
VET	vocational education and training
Vic.	Victoria
WA	Western Australia









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