



ACE Works

The Vocational Outcomes of
Adult and Community Education Courses
in New South Wales

A Research Report commissioned by
the NSW Board of Adult and Community Education

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foreword



OVER THE PAST DECADE Australian vocational education and training has undergone a transformation. An often unheralded contributor to that change has been the adult and community education sector.

The NSW Board of Adult and Community Education has been systematically building an information base about ACE and its contribution to national training reform.

In 1993 *The Vocational Scope of ACE* provided vital information about who was attending ACE courses and what their motives for participating were.

The next step was to go beyond examining participant motive and begin to demonstrate the vocational outcomes of adult and community education.

ACE Works takes the initial research further by giving a more in-depth study of vocational outcomes. The report documents those outcomes from the perspective of the individual learner but also for the first time from the perspectives of industry and region.

Substantial information in the areas of participant, industry and occupation profile, key competency acquisition, skill development and the considerable use of ACE by small business will prove to be a fertile field for future researchers and policy makers.

I wish to acknowledge the work undertaken by the researchers from the School of Adult Education at the University of Technology Sydney.

Their commitment and co-operation is evidenced in the quality of the report.

I expect that the vast amount of information assembled in *ACE Works* will seep deeply into future policy development on ACE and vocational education at both the State and National level.

Val Street

Val Street
Chairperson
NSW Board of Adult and Community
Education



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regional study and Yvonne Downs conducted the employer telephone interviews. Sally Rickuss expertly carried out much of the coding and clerical work. Sophie Buck, Maree Joulain and the School of Adult Education office provided vital administrative support.

Colleagues in the Division of Community and Aboriginal Education encouraged and collaborated in the project. Mark Tennant (Dean, Faculty of Education) and Roger Morris developed the literature review, Griff Foley wrote two of the small centre case studies and Sue Knights and Jane Sampson ran the focus group. Peter Petocz, School of Mathematical Sciences, at UTS arranged trouble-free data processing, advised us on survey analysis and carried out loglinear modelling for Chapter Three as the indispensable statistical consultant to the project.

Finally, thanks are due to the Steering Committee, Sam Thomas, Director, Board of Adult and Community Education and Tony Brown of the Secretariat for their support throughout the project and to my family who dedicated many hours to seeing the report completed on time.

John McIntyre
Project Director

Executive Summary



AS NATIONAL TRAINING REFORM has progressed, the contribution of adult community education to vocational education and training has come into focus. The advent of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) highlighted the question of ACE's position within the new arrangements. Research has been called on to provide more reliable information about the vocational contribution of the sector.

The challenge facing research has been to assess the 'vocational' activity of ACE in a way that is consistent with the broad concept of competence in national policy and which does justice to the character of the sector. The research base for this task has been at best rudimentary. The Report of Senate Standing Committee (Aulich, 1991) while acknowledging ACE's achievements, stated that the sector should demonstrate its outcomes in a 'rigorous and analytic' way.

In 1992, the Board of Adult and Community Education commissioned a report on the extent of its vocational activities. *The Vocational Scope of ACE* highlighted the range of courses having

vocational outcomes, assessed the perceptions of participants in ACE courses and documented the issues the vocational emphasis was raising for providers. The research assisted the Board to participate in the ANTA 'growth funds' and to introduce accredited courses. By the end of 1994 more than half the Board-funded ACE centres were conducting accredited VET courses and in 1995 two thirds of these providers will be registered training providers.

In 1994, the Board commissioned the current research to further investigate the nature of vocational outcomes of the sector in NSW by reporting on the vocational outcomes of adult and community education from the perspectives of the individual learner, the needs of industry and regional and rural provision. The project was also required to document the vocational skills developed by individuals participating in ACE.

The Board stated that –

The challenge for the ACE sector is to quantify and document its role in

vocational education and training. To that end this project aims at quantifying the vocational outcomes of ACE... to identify the labour market status of individual learners, the industries they work in and the occupations they hold and the skill and labour market benefits of participating in ACE.

The research conducted an extensive literature review, a cornerstone survey of 3400 participants in general courses in 40 providers, a study of employers and training for industry and the labour market, and regional and local case studies of selected community colleges and community adult education centres.

There are five areas of major significance emerging from this study of vocational outcomes of ACE courses in NSW.

In summary -

- **Participants:** the research confirms that the typical participant in ACE courses is likely to be female, hold a post-school qualification and be in the labour force. Three quarters are in the workforce and people of non-English speaking background are well-represented. Participants represent a skilled workforce in which professional, para-professional and clerical occupations dominate.
- **Generic skills:** The outcomes of ACE courses are generic skills and subject-knowledge rather than job-specific benefits such as career mobility or job security. Three-quarters of participants report skill improvement in at least one of the Mayer key competencies and 60% improved performance in at least one area of work.
- **Small business:** The major contribution which ACE makes to the needs of industry is through providing local training for small business through the advertised program, notably in the computing area. Such training is valued because it is easily accessed, practically relevant and affordable. A significant quantum of vocational activity also occurs in customised and government contract training.
- **Community colleges.** Some regional ACE providers taken up the 'community college' model and have developed many of its features including community responsive-

ness, self-governance, a range of programs and services and close links with employment agencies. The limitations of self-funding adult education have led them to diversify their revenue base by winning competitive funding to provide programs for target groups. Consequently, they are achieving a widening range of vocational outcomes as they evolve innovative organisational structures.

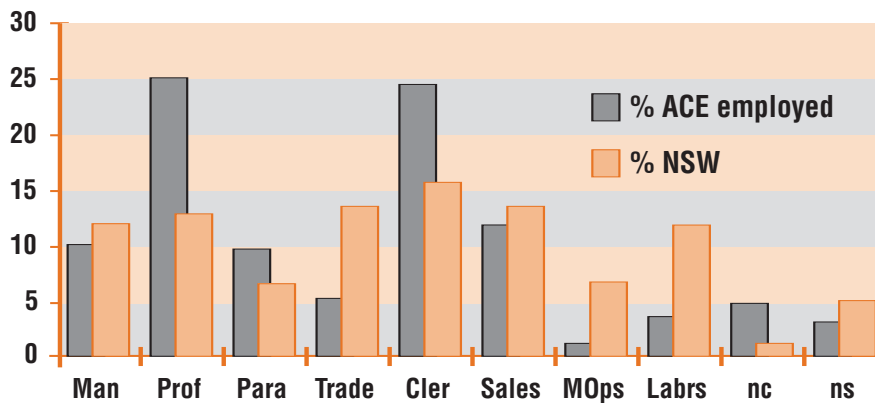
- **Strategic activity in small centres.** The smaller community adult education centres are achieving vocational outcomes on a limited resource base. They are taking a strategic view of their VET activity and identifying specific unmet needs of groups such as rural women. However, poor infrastructure is limiting their VET role and greater cross-sectoral collaboration with TAFE and other providers is needed.

Key Findings: Participants

While ACE is increasingly involved in providing accredited courses and targeted vocational training including literacy, two thirds of its effort is in the short courses advertised to the fee-paying public. To determine the vocational quantum of this program, a sample-survey of 3417 participants in 40 providers across the state asked participants about the outcomes of a past course.

The survey found that -

- the majority of participants are female (75%), hold a post-school qualification (63%) and employed in the paid workforce (75%).
- their primary expectation of the course is gaining knowledge of the subject, rather than a benefit at work (some 18%), personal social development or a benefit to home and community life.
- they report that the outcomes of courses are generic skills rather than specific benefits such as career mobility or job security. Three-quarters of participants report skill improvement in at least one of the Mayer key competencies and 60% improved performance in at least one area of work.



- the course type (field of study) is the major factor accounting for differences in the expectations and outcomes which participants report. Other learner characteristics such as age, sex and occupation are less important influences on outcome. However, what type of course is taken is influenced by age, sex, occupation, employment and education.
- participants express high levels of satisfaction and cite quality tutoring, right level and practical relevance of the course as the main factors assisting their learning.

The survey established the occupational and employment profile of participants. ACE is reaching a cross-section of the community and broad range of occupations. The ACE population represents a skilled workforce in which professional, para-professional and clerical occupations dominate.

- middle level qualifications (certificates) are the dominant form of qualification and are held by 50% of those employed
- unqualified and not-employed women number fewer than one-tenth of the sample
- A third (38%) of those employed work in Community Services industry, 60% in the private sector

Skills

The report provided evidence for the first time about the skill outcomes of ACE courses. It found that large numbers report a gain in generic skills -

- Three-quarters of participants (75%) report 'improved skill' in a least one of the eight Mayer key competencies, notably 'Communicating' and 'Using Technology'.
- Generic skills are closely linked to the course taken - for example, half of those who report a gain in the 'Communicating' key competency were doing a language or communication course.
- A majority (60%) report 'improved performance' in at least one of four areas of work including 22% who say they gained 'relevant job skills or knowledge' and 19% who 'improved thinking'.
- Fewer participants report specific job benefits - one third see the course as helping their job prospects or career, and only about a quarter were influenced to enrol by workplace changes.
- Occupation, sector and industry of employment and employment status affect the kind of course chosen, and the course, rather than these factors, influences the type of generic skill or other outcome which participants report.

Employers and Industry Needs

The research explored the industry perspective through a combination of survey, interview and case studies.

The report –

- Discounts the view that many providers are actively customising training for industry or tendering for government training, and recommends that providers develop specific vocational education strategies, for example, providing employment services.
- Demonstrates that ACE is making a ‘hidden contribution’ to training small business through their general program of advertised courses, and that a large community college may have up to 400 local employers using the college in any year
- Found that in the industry profile of employers paying for courses, the prominent industries were Manufacturing, Construction, Wholesale-Retail and Finance, Property and Business and Community Services, and the prominent courses were in the business, computing and health area.
- Found that employers do not know much about ACE, and that providers need to better track their business clients and market courses to them.

Regional colleges and small centres

A major part of the report analysed ACE in regional and rural NSW through detailed case studies of selected colleges and CAECs.

These studies suggest that -

- Innovative colleges are developing some features of the ‘community college model’ such as community responsiveness, open access, a multi-purpose curriculum and

close working relationships with labour market agencies

- They have diversified their funding base by gaining government funding for target groups with specific VET needs and widened the scope of vocational outcomes achieved by developing ‘program-based delivery’ to these target groups
- The potential growth of ‘self-funded’ general adult education is limited by population size of the college catchment, its relative dispersion, its affluence as measured by household income and the ‘administrative stretch’ of the college.
- Smaller community adult education centres are being strategic about their VET activity especially by identifying specific needs such as those of rural women but poor infrastructure is limiting their ability to perform a larger VET role
- Greater efforts need to be made to achieve progress in active local partnerships with TAFE in areas such as sharing teachers, resources and curricula, if there is to be progress on the goal of ‘cross-sectoral collaboration’ suggested by the 1991 NBEET review of VET in rural Australia

Conclusions

The report suggests that ACE can expand its role in the developing VET system in a number of ways. It argues first that the ACE system provides some insights into what lifelong learning is and how it may be achieved in the VET system. It then outlines a number of strategies for extending ACE’s vocational role.

These include -

- Extending the range of accredited courses by building on the wide base of general non-credit courses.
- Sharpening the skills focus by emphasising both specific knowledge and generic skills as outcomes of its courses.
- Widening the ACE participant profile by continuing efforts to target groups with special needs such as the unemployed,

people of non-English speaking background and people with disabilities.

- Promoting the industry training roles of the sector, becoming better known to industry, and tracking its small business clients and marketing its strengths to them.
 - Enhancing ACE's role in labour market training by developing closer relationships with the CES and specialising in certain
- outcome areas, such as the needs of those groups of women who predominate in ACE.
 - Collaborating with other VET providers and achieving more rapid progress towards active partnerships between TAFE and ACE at the local level.
 - Improving ACE resources, since lack of infrastructure funding is clearly limiting the potential vocational role of ACE providers.

Overview of the Research

IN 1992, THE BOARD OF ADULT AND Community Education commissioned UTS to investigate the extent of the vocational education and training activities (VET) of the ACE sector in New South Wales.

That research, *The Vocational Scope of ACE*, showed that ACE providers were indeed playing a role in the emerging vocational education and training system. The report focused attention on the range of courses having vocational outcomes, assessed the perceptions of participants in ACE courses, and documented the issues VET was raising for providers such as accreditation and resourcing. It demonstrated the breadth and complexity of the question of the vocational outcomes in the sector.

That research assisted the Board to argue for the inclusion of ACE in the emerging national training system and to share in the 'growth funds' made available by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). Over \$2m flowed into ACE to support the introduction of accredited courses in 1994. Over 1994 - 1995, some 834,000 contact hours will be

funded at a cost of \$4.5m. These courses include certificates and competency statements in general education, TESOL, medical terminology, computing applications, train-the-trainer, hospitality, retailing, horticulture, calligraphy and home-based child-care. They are offered in both city and country locations and at large and small centres.

ACE has emerged from a situation, where in 1992, it offered no accredited courses, to one where, by the end of 1994 more than half the Board-funded ACE centres were conducting accredited VET courses. In 1995 two thirds of these providers will be registered training providers under the NFROT agreement (ACE, 1994, 1).

The brief

The Vocational Scope of ACE research attempted to document the vocational role of ACE in NSW from a research base that was at best

rudimentary and in 1994, the Board commissioned a further project.

The brief for this project (Appendix 1) was more ambitious and sought information about outcomes, particularly in areas where little or none existed, such as ACE’s contribution to industry training and the formation of occupational skills.

The brief of the project (Appendix 2) was –

to research and report on the vocational outcomes of adult and community education by:

reporting on the vocational outcomes of ACE from the perspectives of the individual learner, industry and the contribution of ACE to regional and rural development

documenting the type of vocational skills developed by individuals participating in ACE and a profile of learner occupations.

The Board shared the view expressed by the Senate Standing Committee (Aulich, 1991) that

ACE needs to demonstrate the outcomes of its activities in a rigorous and analytic way.

The brief stated that –

The challenge for the ACE sector is to quantify and document its role in vocational education and training. To that end this project aims at quantifying the vocational outcomes of ACE... to identify the labour market status of individual learners, the industries they work in and the occupations they hold and the skill and labour market benefits of participating in ACE.

The challenges in meeting this brief in the short time frame provided were considerable. There are few good models for quantifying outcomes in adult community education and assessing outcomes in ACE is a complex task, from any point of view. A number of parameters are involved in exploring outcomes from the perspectives of participants, providers and employers. The project was therefore broad in scope and canvassed a wide range of issues.

S U M M A R Y R E P O R T

**The Context:
ACE in the VET System**

The need to document the vocational outcomes of ACE courses arises from a rapidly changing policy context. ACE is establishing its position within a diverse and developing national vocational education and training system.

In doing so, ACE is responding to a number of challenges on the basis of its traditional strengths – the qualities of being client focused, flexible, able to respond to local demand, accessible, and of providing an initial platform for further education and training. These are often

cited as being the hallmarks of ACE provision. To widen its vocational profile, ACE is taking steps to develop articulation and credit transfer arrangements for its short courses, which are well-suited to modular design and readily linked to competency standards. ACE is increasing its role in delivering nationally recognised training. Strategic co-operation with other providers regarding resources, knowledge of best practices and curriculum, will be increasingly important.

The current research is therefore part of a larger project to consolidate ACE’s vocational role and provide information that will assist in its further development.

Researching Vocational Outcomes of ACE

The legacy of previous research is a rich conceptual understanding of the outcomes from the perspectives of participants. This provides a foundation for the task of a 'rigorous, analysable' documentation of outcomes called for by the report of the Senate Standing Committee (Aulich, 1991). A review of this literature suggests that –

- Policy research in ACE is expected to provide more compelling evidence of outcomes, describing populations of ACE participants rather than individuals.
- Research needs to clarify the different 'domains' that are explored in outcomes research. There is a need to bring out the relationships between the characteristics of participants, their courses and outcomes and the agencies providing these courses.
- Outcomes research should acknowledge the predominance of women as both participants and educators in ACE, and recognise that the issue of 'pathways' to and from ACE courses is an important focus.
- Research should recognise the various standpoints from which outcomes are evaluated and explore and report different perspectives – those of the participant, the provider, employers and the localities served by ACE agencies.
- A range of methods should be used to document the outcomes of ACE courses. Sample surveys of participants should be complemented by structured case studies of local providers which document how 'community-based' providers do their work, and in particular, how they interpret and meet adult education needs.

Perspectives: Participants and Their Skills

The research was charged to 'go beyond motive' and quantify the vocational outcomes of participation in ACE. A sound conceptual

framework was needed for this task, and the research developed a model which describes a vocational outcome in four main ways – the course taken, the skills acquired, the participants, background and the industry and employment context of learning.

The cornerstone of the research was a sample-survey of 3417 participants in general adult education courses in 40 Board-assisted ACE providers in NSW in 1994. This survey –

- confirms that the profile of participants is very similar to that of earlier surveys. Compared to the NSW population, more are female (76%), younger (71% between 20 and 50 years old), in paid employment of some kind (73%) and hold some form of post-school qualification (62%).
- establishes that their occupational background is primarily from the managerial, professional, clerical and sales occupations. The main industries they represent are manufacturing, wholesale and retail, financial and community services and recreational and personal services.
- finds that participants see the vocational relevance of courses in terms of the generic skills gained rather than job-specific skills or benefits such as career mobility. They see courses as improving their skills in terms of the key competencies and general application to areas of work.
- finds that participants are clearly 'subject-centred' in their expectations and gains from courses. The main differences in outcomes among participants are due to course field of study and primary expectation, not occupation, industry group or employment status.
- indicates that these participants express high levels of satisfaction and cite quality in tutoring and the level and practical relevance of the course as the main factors assisting their learning.
- suggests that participants are conscious of themselves as lifelong learners, interested in expanding their knowledge and intellectual horizons and who see the outcomes of their courses as having a relevance to their lives that is wider than job security or career mobility.

ACE, Employers and Industry

There is little hard evidence of the role ACE plays in meeting industry needs. Current surveys appear to under-estimate the scale of community-based training such as that provided by ACE. The research aimed to identify those employers who use ACE courses as part of their vocational training effort.

The research provides for the first time some glimpses into the way ACE may be serving small businesses and local organisations. It supports the claims of Principals that local business is their natural clientele who are using the general program for its training rather than requesting customised training. Several case studies of larger providers using data extracted from their college financial records clearly establishes that ACE makes a 'hidden contribution' to training small businesses.

- In 1994, hundreds of small businesses paid for people to attend ACE courses in the largest providers. St George-Sutherland catered to over four hundred businesses and organisations, Parramatta and Manly-Warringah over two-hundred, and Strathfield, one hundred.
- Many business names appeared to be self-employed people, and generally about half appeared to be limited companies. The industry profile varied from provider to provider but Manufacturing, Construction, Wholesale-Retail, Finance, Property, Business and Community Services were well represented.
- Analysis of courses taken shows a very marked concentration in the computing and business areas, though health was also important.
- Postcode analysis shows that the business and organisation names were mostly local, confirming that ACE almost exclusively serves local businesses. Up to 90% of postcodes associated with business names were in the local government area of the ACE provider or adjacent suburbs.

Employer perceptions of ACE and training

Employers' knowledge, use of ACE and their training needs and practices were explored through 36 telephone interviews and a reply-paid questionnaire returned by some 200 employers. Taking into account a response skewed to larger enterprises, this survey concluded that –

- ACE is not well known among these employers. Fewer than half said they knew a lot about ACE or local college courses, suggesting that providers and the Board may need to promote themselves and their courses more vigorously to business.
- Interviews revealed that employers tend to perceive ACE rather narrowly as recreational and assume vocational courses are limited mainly to computer skills.
- Asked about their training needs, expressed in terms of the areas of the Mayer key competencies, three-quarters of those interviewed indicated use of computing technology, communication skills and teamwork as priority areas, a result strikingly consistent with participants' views of course outcomes.
- Almost all employers (80%) favoured in-house training, with smaller proportions using external courses in some way. Less than a tenth of employers paid fees, gave employees time off.
- More employers (40%) state that practical relevance is the main factor in deciding on a course, ahead of timing, local access and quality of tutoring, and these factors are more important than cost. Interviews revealed that small businesses favoured short courses in ACE that were provided in some flexible way or after-hours.
- Interviews probed the issue of accreditation and suggested that most employers would like to see more short course certification, which was useful and valuable if recognised in industry and the employee's field of employment.

Customised industry training and government contracts.

The research also examined the role of ACE providers in customised and contract training. While there is scope for greater expansion of these programs, it is clear that providers have learned to be strategic about their commitments.

Customised training refers to a course which has been requested by a client and tailored to meet their training needs. The focus group believed the costs of customised training outweighed the benefits. They reported difficulties in organising this form of training including the inflexibility of employers, the work and time required in setting up the course, delays experienced in decision-making by potential customers, the long lead time in developing clientele, the uncertain results compared to tendering, and the relative inexperience of ACE staff in liaising with potential customers.

Case studies of customised training suggest that there are a number of factors that make for successful customisation of ACE courses. These include -

- Being prepared to meet the employer's needs for flexibility in the timing, length, venue and content of the course, while recovering hidden costs of product development, yet remaining competitive in price.
- Responding quickly to an initial inquiry and being able to assess, at the outset, both the stated and 'unrecognised needs' of the client.
- A good understanding of industry and workplace culture on the part of the negotiator and a trainer/tutor who is sensitive to the workplace context.
- Setting up a process in which the college and employer can evaluate outcomes and seek feedback on quality.

A provider focus group found that many had learned valuable lessons from tendering for government contract training (for example, that it is better building strength in one area, developing skill in submitting for ongoing funding for continuing projects, and considering carefully the 'opportunity costs' of the

time and effort required.) The research also analysed data obtained from DEET about the extent of ACE involvement in government contract training. This analysis showed that there has been some variability in the participation of individual providers over the last three years -

- A handful of larger providers has rapidly expanded their role and the general pattern is for them to gain more funding from contract training.
- Small centres have gained more from individual placements (for example, where course fees are paid by the CES), and this points strongly to an area of potential growth as new policies on employment and training require case management approaches and encourage more 'self-referral' by unemployed people.

While colleges are more likely to tender when they know they have the resources, the staff, the physical venues to support a bid, the effort of tendering for targeted programs represents an important extension of ACE's vocational and training role.

The regional and rural perspective

ACE has a significant presence in rural NSW and the research was charged with documenting the vocational outcomes of ACE from a regional perspective. A review of the literature shows that over the last twenty years there has been no shortage of reports and initiatives which have documented the problems rural Australia has in adequate access to and participation in VET. Yet NBEET recently concluded that these efforts 'have proven only marginally effective' and that 'the provision of post-compulsory education and training... for non-metropolitan Australians remains uneven and inadequate' (NBEET, 1991, xv).

Chapter Five outlines the regional and rural perspective on vocational outcomes of ACE, bringing together the literature on rural education, the development of the community college model for regional TAFE and the

growth of ACE provision in rural NSW. This literature review concluded that -

- The search for a 'community-responsive' model of post-compulsory education led to the 'community college' model for TAFE in the early 1980s, but subsequently, training reform and the restructuring of TAFE have created a new division of educational labour in which ACE has inherited a potentially larger role in providing for local and regional needs for VET.
- Cross-sectoral co-ordination is the single most important factor which will improve access and participation in VET for country people, a conclusion reiterated by many reports culminating in the NBEET review of 1991.
- The issue of cross-sectoral collaboration is potentially much more significant for the future of ACE than the long-running debate within ACE regarding the relative merits of CAECs or regional community colleges in meeting adult education needs in rural areas.
- Therefore, one of the key issues for ACE providers in non-metropolitan areas is what kind of linkages they have with other agencies to ensure that local and regional needs for VET are comprehensively identified and met.

The chapter reports case studies of two regional 'community colleges' that have developed as significant providers of vocational education and training, and five community adult education centres which illustrate how CAECs meet VET needs in a wide range of social and economic contexts.

The regional and community adult education centre case studies provide abundant evidence that ACE is expanding its vocational role in country areas, but that much more rapid progress towards greater cross-sectoral co-operation is needed if the key national strategy recommendations are to be realised. The case studies showed that -

- The regional colleges appear to be developing in ways that are consistent with the 'community college' ideal. They have embraced the ideal of community responsiveness and developed flexible delivery programs, multi-purpose curriculum and close relationships with the CES.

- The diversification of their funding base has led them to develop diverse programs. They are expanding the range of outcomes by gaining funding to target specific vocational needs including literacy and employment services. They have ventured into industry training. To do this they have developed an emphasis on quality of educational service as a basis for competition for resources, and they appear to adapt their organisational structures as new program elements are taken on. However, their achievements, built up on the basis of short-term funding, are at best tenuous.
- Rural and regional providers have generally greater limitations on their ability to be self-funding. The major difference between regional ACE providers and Sydney suburban colleges is the degree to which the user-pays principle can successfully underwrite college activities. This depends on factors such as: whether there is a large and concentrated 'catchment' population; whether the college must service widely dispersed multiple centres; and whether the regional population has levels of household income to afford course fees.

These colleges have a large, diversified program, and can claim a significant impact in terms of vocational outcomes. Their provision is regional and focuses on the delivery of programs through a networking of services. They achieve economies of scale both in delivering programs to remote centres, in developing program quality and in establishing conditions that retain staff and provide for their professional development. In short, these regional community colleges are of a size that allows them to make a contribution to VET and to plan strategically to expand that role.

The role of small centres

The very rapid growth of community adult education in country centres has given them recognition as an integral part of total education provision. Rural adult community education has come to symbolise the way communities can take 'grassroots action' to identify and organise adult education relevant to their

needs. The case studies of small centres suggest that size is not a barrier to centres taking initiatives that contribute to expanding the range of local VET opportunities.

- These centres have responded to the challenges of the vocational emphasis by being strategic about their activity – identifying specific needs for vocational education, and training and meeting these needs without at the same time attempting tasks for which they are not resourced.
- They are identifying their ‘niche’ in local provision alongside Skillshare and TAFE, and focusing on specific vocational needs such as workplace literacy and certain target groups such as rural women, disabled people, the unemployed and Aboriginal people.
- Links with other providers exist at the level of liaison groups and informal understandings about course duplication, but are otherwise poorly developed. Much needs to be done to ensure that training gaps do not appear through lack of cross-sectoral co-operation.
- There is an urgent need to find ways to advance co-operation with TAFE regarding shared premises, teachers and equipment, since this is the main way in which small centres can cost-effectively expand their VET role and their range of accredited modules.

The achievements of the five CAECs studied are remarkable considering their minimal budgets and their dependence on a largely volunteer workforce. The research finds that the ‘minimal resourcing’ model inherent in community-based education is placing a ceiling on the ability of these small centres to play a larger role in vocational education and training. This limits their capacity to compete for contract training as larger colleges do, and the increased demands of ACE’s expanding VET involvement is placing an additional burden on part-time co-ordinators.

The issue of links with other providers looms large. Despite a willingness for providers to liaise about courses, there is little evidence of progress ‘on the ground’ towards the kind of active cross-sectoral collaboration envisaged by the 1991 NBEET Review. Much more work needs to be done in the area of articulation of

courses, the sharing of resources, venues, equipment and teachers if ‘cross-sectoral collaboration’ is to be a reality. Further, the strong impression of the researchers is that there may be training gaps appearing as TAFE focuses more on longer courses – gaps that ACE and Skillshare are ill-equipped to bridge without resourcing more commensurate with the task. This is despite the remarkable achievements of centres in expanding their provision and widening the range of outcomes achieved.

Expanding ACE’s role in the VET System

The report drew a number of conclusions from the detailed information about vocational outcomes of ACE courses, explored from the multiple perspectives of individual, skill formation, industry and regional and rural NSW. It discusses some ways in which ACE can strengthen and expand its role in the VET system in line with national training reform.

The research first has a number of implications for understanding ANTA’s key goal of encouraging lifelong learning opportunities in the VET system. The research represents some of the first real evidence of lifelong learning as a vocational outcome.

- Lifelong learning is an **orientation**. ACE participants appear to have a positive attitude to learning. They seek recurring opportunities to upgrade or expand their knowledge and skills and see their skills gains in generic terms. They are ready to ‘learn to learn’ in ways that will help them adapt to changes in their workplace and community roles. The findings about the key competencies show that participants value the ‘subject-focus’ of the short ACE course, but they also see generic skill improvement beyond the specific knowledge. They express high levels of satisfaction in their courses, and citing quality in tutoring, and the level and practical relevance as the main factors assisting their learning.
- Lifelong learning **encompasses informal**

learning. Lifelong learning embraces the range of experience from informal learning in the workplace and community through to formalised and accredited training. ACE through its locally available, short courses assists people to bridge the gap between informal learning and formal education and training.

- Lifelong learning is **not a type of course or provision.** Short ACE courses are an important way to increase learning opportunities, and facilitate lifelong learning, but lifelong learning is an orientation to be desired in every part of the VET system. The VET system might therefore look at ACE and ask what features of ACE attract the kind of participants who report their outcomes in terms of enhanced horizons and subject-centredness, and see the gains from their courses in terms of an enhancement of their generic skills.
- Lifelong learning implies a **wide range of VET needs.** The findings of the research challenge the view that the only or the main contribution of ACE is 'second-chance learning', for example, as the second report of the ESFC (1993) suggests. It certainly performs this role for many participants, and so do other agencies. But on our evidence it is more accurate, to say that ACE is performing a recurrent education role, providing access to courses that meet a wide range of adult learning needs including upgrading workplace knowledge and skills.

There are a number of other ways in which ACE can expand its role. These include –

- Extending the range of accredited courses, by building on the wide base of non-award provision and formalising the ways in which existing courses serve the needs of employers.
- Sharpening the skills focus. ACE makes an important contribution to upgrading the skills of many occupations, including those with middle level skills. It can enhance this role by emphasising both specific knowledge dimension and generic skills as potential outcomes of its courses.
- Widening the ACE participant profile through continuing efforts to target groups with special needs such as the unemployed,

people of non-English speaking background and people with disabilities.

- Promoting the industry training roles of the sector. ACE is providing training for small business, but needs to be better known by tracking its local business clients and marketing its strengths to them.
- Enhancing ACE's role in labour market training. There is considerable potential for growth by developing closer relationships with the CES, seeking individual placements and specialising in certain outcome areas, such as the needs of those groups of women who predominate in ACE.
- Collaborating with other VET providers. More rapid progress towards active partnerships between TAFE and ACE is needed at the local level, where ACE access to publicly-funded facilities will underpin an expansion of accredited short courses and articulation.
- Improving ACE infrastructure funding. There is an urgent need to address the lack of infrastructure funding which is clearly limiting the potential vocational role of ACE providers.

The chapter also recommends some future directions for research, noting that current projects including this one represent an unprecedented investment of research effort in analysing and documenting the activities of adult community education in Australia.

Future research on ACE should be linked to larger research questions about participation in the VET system as a whole. As the VET 'system' becomes more 'networked' and systematised, the greater will be the need for research that tracks participants as they move around the system 'adding value' to their qualifications and experience (cf ESFC, 1994).

There are a number of directions for future studies –

- Course-taking and workplace learning – investigating how short courses impact on learning in the workplace and assist the development of specific and generic skills.
- Women, skills and ACE – examining the skill levels being achieved in different occupational groups, and a focus on the

outcomes for women in the workforce using ACE to upgrade their skills.

- Re-entry to learning – closer analysis of the relationship of ACE in providing ‘second chance learning’, especially in relation to size and location of provider.
- Small business and local training – further investigation of ACE’s role in training small business, particularly studies which focus on selected LGAs.
- Cross-sectoral collaboration – examining to what extent local and regional needs for VET are being adequately met by existing

providers and what steps are needed to develop their greater collaboration.

- Community colleges and ACE – further case studies of the emerging ‘community college’ in NSW and Victoria, assessing their growing contribution to VET.
- The economics of self-funding – analysis of the economics of cost-recovery and submission-based funding of ACE provision of VET.

The report includes a number of appendices. Further detail on research methodology is available in Technical Notes published separately.

ACE and the VET Context

THIS CHAPTER SETS THE CONTEXT FOR research into the vocational outcomes of Adult and Community Education in NSW. It discusses current policy developments in vocational education and training, reviews the relevant research literature on ACE and outlines a conceptual model of vocational outcomes. It then outlines four perspectives on the study of outcomes in ACE and overviews the project methodology.

The Vocational Education and Training Context

In recent years education in Australia has been subject to unprecedented change. The principal reason for the change is that education is being seen as an instrument of government economic and social policy. It is seen as a key element in improving the skills base of all Australians, which is a prerequisite for the success of the restructuring of Australian industry to make it more competitive in world markets. The

emergence of VET is based on the proposition that we are now in a more knowledge-based economic era where our capacity to remain competitive depends on the knowledge and skills of the workforce.

There are many in the school, adult and higher education sectors who are opposed to the introduction of vocational education. The argument of the opponents, in essence, is that vocational education is incompatible with aims of general education. The former, it is argued, is technocratic, specific, practical, managerial while the latter is democratic, egalitarian, critical, collaborative (Wellington, 1993). The first supports a view of the social function of education as being concerned with the transmission of exploitable knowledge and participation in the market through the development of skills which possess an exchange value (Feinberg, 1983). The latter sees the purpose of education as being primarily political and cultural. In this paradigm, the aim of education is seen as being the creation of a democratic society where free and equal people can meet to discuss the nature of the good society.

While this analysis of vocational education might have been true even five years ago, it is simply no longer possible to sustain, especially in the light of recent developments. The aim of a good vocational education is, among other things, the development of the same conceptual skills as are developed in general education courses. It is not concerned with practical skills at the expense of the conceptual but practical skills that are integrated with the conceptual. Of course, the aim of vocational education is less oriented towards a critical perspective on society than, say, the study of history or politics. But the knowledge and skills which are being developed are not merely compatible with the general education paradigm but may provide the individual with the confidence and perhaps the tools to engage in this critical approach.

It is in this context that governments in Australia have introduced education and training reform measures, the principal features of which are described below.

1 Efficiency, effectiveness and accountability, and a subsequent concern with management structures and practices.

Although there is a new stress on market autonomy and decentralised control, there is at the same time a centralising of control through the pursuit of a common national curriculum. To this end there have been numerous reports and enquiries into post-compulsory education and training in Australia. Most notably, the ACTU/TDC report *Australia Reconstructed* (1987), the Dawkins' White Paper *Higher Education: a Policy Statement* (1988), the Finn Report *Young People's Participation in Post-Compulsory Education and Training* (1991), the Carmichael Report, *The Australian Vocational Certificate Training System* (ESFC, 1991), the Mayer paper *Employment-Related Key Competencies: a Proposal for Consultation* (Mayer, 1992), and the follow up report *Putting Education to Work: the Key Competencies Report* (Mayer, 1993), the government White Paper *Working Nation* (1994), and the Employment and Skills Formation Council Second Report *Raising the Standard* (ESFC, 1994). These reports

and enquiries, particularly those of Finn, Carmichael, and Mayer, have focused on the need for a national vocational and further education system with nationally-agreed standards and a means of measuring those standards. The establishment of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) is an attempt to give effect to a national approach to VET, and the development of State Training Profiles (BVET, 1994) is seen as a key element in this approach.

Each state now has an accreditation body (VETAB in NSW) which accredits courses and registers providers. Registration is the means by which quality in VET can be regulated. There is a more open and competitive training market with a range of providers tendering for both publicly and privately funded vocational training.

2 The identification of core competencies as the basis of curriculum development.

The notion of competency and the development of competencies is the cornerstone of the vocational education and training system. For example the National Training Board (NTB) was created in 1990 to be the co-ordinating agency for establishing a consistent Australian Standards Framework. This framework provides a common reference point for industries in the development of national competency standards (the National Framework for the Recognition of Training, NFROT). The idea is that competency standards, established in consultation and co-operation with industry, will be the benchmark for curriculum development, assessment, training delivery, accreditation, and individual certification in the Australian vocational education and training system. The establishment of ANTA in 1994 has further strengthened the importance of competency standards. Indeed, for effective participation in the national system it is necessary for training to be based on industry or enterprise competency standards.

The Finn Report identified six areas of competence considered essential for preparation for, and participation in, work: language and communication, mathematics, scientific and technological understanding, cultural

understanding, problem solving, and personal and interpersonal skills. The Mayer Committee identified seven key competency strands which are essential for participation in work, further education, and adult life in general: collecting, analysing and organising information, communicating ideas and information, planning and organising activities, working with others and in teams, using mathematical ideas and techniques, solving problems and using technology. The eighth competency, cultural understanding, has now been added.

The Carmichael Report is an Employment and Skills Formation Council response to the Finn Report. The view expressed is that all training be competency-based and industry-driven, and that progressive implementation be accelerated so that a substantial amount of training is competency-based by 1995. The intention is that training be broad, and attract credit in school and university courses.

3 Equity and access measures linked clearly with the vocational outcomes of education.

In addition to the variety of broad education reforms which ostensibly promote access and equity, there is a growing emphasis on the vocational outcomes of equity programs. In migrant education, ESL, literacy, education for the unemployed, Aboriginal education, and community access courses, there is a concern to demonstrate vocational outcomes and even use such programs as a means to workplace reform. The White Paper, *Australia's Language*, for example, firmly places language and literacy at the heart of workplace reform.

4 Increasing links between the different educational sectors (school, TAFE, university) and between the education sector as a whole and the community, industry and commerce.

The Australian Government is clearly promoting a recurrent education strategy which emphasises the links between school, TAFE, community education, workplace

training and higher education, and which encourages the recognition of prior learning across the various sectors of education. There is a move to establish flexible pathways of learning, and routes of skill formation which provide access to educational opportunities for those not traditionally well served by the system. For example, in 1993 the Board of Studies in NSW issued its HSC Pathways Implementation Guidelines which introduced more flexible arrangements for the HSC (such as the accumulation of the HSC over 5 years, and the accreditation of vocational courses). There now exists an HSC/TAFE Credit Transfer folder which provides details of TAFE credit transfer arrangements for 34 Board courses. Similar transfer arrangements exist between TAFE and the universities, and to a lesser extent between schools and universities. In higher education the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee's (AVCC) Policy Statement for the 1995-97 Triennium specifically refers to the need for partnerships with industry and vocational education and training. Throughout the system there is now more scope for having learning (or rather, the outcomes of learning) recognised wherever it occurs: in schools, in TAFE colleges, through workplace training, and through private and community-based education providers.

5 An acknowledgment of the important role of informal learning in the workplace and in the community, of continuing education, and how these can articulate with the formal system.

There has been substantial growth in the participation of adults in educational provision, whether it be continuing education for professionals, workplace training, basic literacy and numeracy, learning of English as a second language, preparatory and access courses for those seeking re-entry to education or the labour market, tertiary courses leading to formal awards, or community-based courses focusing on such areas as health, liberal studies, the arts, communication, community development, and the environment (Evans, 1987; 1993). All this activity can be included in the national system, provided that the training is recognised and accredited, and based on competency standards.

The Role of ACE in VET

Given the above features of education and training reform, how should the ACE sector position itself? Although the ACE sector is certainly recognised as having a place in vocational education and training and is included within the scope of ANTA, it is yet to firmly position itself within the national system.

An earlier investigation, *The Vocational Scope of ACE*, documented provider views of the position of ACE. It noted a 'clear consensus among providers that ACE makes its greatest contribution to VET by providing accessible and inexpensive learning opportunities across the board, by having the flexibility to respond to immediate local needs, and by being open-ended so learners are able to define the purposes of their learning. Three other crucial but less recognised ways in which ACE contributes to vocational education and training are in bridging access to further education and training, in fostering small business opportunities, income supplementation, and labour force adjustment, and contributing to the 'hidden work' of domestic economy and community activity.' (McIntyre, Morris and Tennant, 1993, vii).

That report also showed ACE as meeting a strong demand for business, administration and management courses. Computing, software packages, keyboarding, clerical, specialised reception skills, typing, book-keeping, and shorthand were most often cited as courses that were vocational. This feature of ACE shows it to be addressing an area which has arguably been neglected by other VET providers, that of middle level skills in the workforce. The report *Raising the Standard* (1993) identifies as a major concern 'the establishment of effective and multiple pathways to middle level qualifications... such courses should be flexible enough to cater for both new entrants and those currently in the workforce' (1993, xix). Middle level qualifications are the advanced certificate and the associate diploma. It is in this area that ACE is well placed to respond to a workforce need by gaining accreditation for its courses and negotiating their articulation with these qualifications.

ACE is responding to a number of challenges on the basis of its traditional strengths – the qualities of being client-focused, flexible, able to respond to local demand, accessible, and of providing an initial platform for further education and training. These are often cited as being the hallmarks of ACE provision. To widen its vocational profile, ACE is taking steps to develop articulation and credit transfer arrangements for its short courses, which are well-suited to modular design and readily linked to competency standards. ACE is increasing its role in delivering nationally recognised training. The Chief Executive Officer of ANTA, Terry Moran, stressed the importance of accreditation in a speech on the role he sees for ACE: 'Having appropriate ACE courses accredited is going to be essential. Likewise it will be important to lift the image of those courses as leading to employment-related skills and meeting industry needs.' (AAACE News, April, 1994). Strategic co-operation with other providers regarding resources, knowledge of best practices and curriculum, will also be increasingly important.

The current research is therefore part of a larger project to consolidate ACE's vocational role and provide information that will assist in its further development.

The Research Literature on Outcomes

Research on ACE outcomes has mainly focused on outcomes from the participant's perspective. The small research literature reflects the policy ferment since 1975 surrounding the scope and funding of post-compulsory education. This literature was extensively drawn upon by the Senate Standing Committee report on Adult Community Education (Aulich, 1991) and has helped ACE to gain greater recognition for its social and economic contribution. Training reform has witnessed an intensification of the research effort (cf McIntyre, Morris and Tennant, 1993; Brown, Gillam and O'Connell, 1994; Barnett and Wilson, 1994; Adult Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB), in progress).

The Aulich report summarised the ‘achievements of the sector’ and reflected the pressures for ACE to demonstrate its vocational worth. The Committee noted that any view of outcomes makes assumptions about the purposes of learning:

To speak of goals or purposes is to speak from a particular vantage point, in terms which are relative, not absolute. The questions which must always remain in the back of our minds are ‘Whose goals and purposes, which perspective?’

In the current climate, demands for specifiable and quantifiable results are being pressed on all sectors of education. The adult and community education sector has ... by and large lacked both the inclination and the resources systematically to document its achievements, least of all in ways which can be easily measured in economic terms ... Clear benefits do, however flow from adult and community education, and there can no longer be any doubt that many have economic value. (Aulich, 1991, 76).

It concluded ‘It is clear that the adult and community education sector has no cause to shrink from attempts to measure its achievements. On the contrary, there is much to be gained in documenting its activities in rigorous, analysable fashion’ (Aulich, 1991, 86).

In meeting this challenge to document outcomes, the Australian literature shares features with the ACE literature worldwide. Astute use has been made of anecdotal and case study material to demonstrate the worth of adult education. More often than not, research has spoken directly from what adult educators know experientially of the range of outcomes of their work. Attempts to gather quantitative evidence have been notably less successful. The earlier research has provided a rich conceptual understanding of the purposes, structures and results of learning in ACE and provided a foundation for a more ‘rigorous, analysable’ approach to outcomes.

The vocational education and training context now demands more comprehensive and analytical evidence of outcomes. It is precisely because adult and community educa-

tion reaches so many participants, giving it a large potential role in VET, that research must have more to say about populations of participants by building quantitative studies that consolidate the qualitative evidence of the past.

Over the last decade or so, a small number of researchers have played a part in persuading policy-makers that ACE courses have vocational relevance. The small number of Australian studies must be regarded as beginning this work and doing so without the benefit of an established research base. These studies were policy driven, committed to adult education values and eclectic in their methodology.

Community Learning: A Public Investment (Saleeba and Benson, 1986) is the report of a study completed for the Victorian TAFE Board which used a series of questionnaires, case studies, interviews and a literature review to collect a comprehensive picture of the role of community learning in Victoria. The study found *inter alia* that community education programs were –

- A major form of access for women, people over 30 years, and the under-educated.
- Important in helping to deal with loneliness and isolation, in developing self esteem and providing a path to formal study.
- Significant in developing more capable and informed people, offering an entry into the workforce and in developing skills necessary for everyday life.

Moreover, of the 258 mature adults in HSC courses, 30% of males and 70% of females had taken a community education course. Of these participants, 89% considered such courses to be useful and a stepping stone to more formal study. A study of 250 community providers found they were then offering 10,000 courses with 150,000 enrolments and 90,000 people attending classes each week. The evidence was clear that more people become involved in formal study *via* these community providers and their courses than through any other means. This theme of ‘pathways’ from ACE courses has been a major theme of outcomes research ever since. In terms of outcomes, providers claimed that –

- 77% of students returned for further courses.

- 32% of students moved on to more formal courses.
- 23% of students moved on to more vocational study.
- 24% of students moved to full or part time employment.

At the same time, Kimberley (1986) conducted her well-known 'Outcomes Report' for the Victorian TAFE Board. This study argued that a broader definition of 'vocational' that focuses on life skills – such as adaptability, decision making and responsibility – was needed for effective vocational education. Moreover, it argued that as well as providing opportunities for such vocational education, community providers allowed people to find direction. The under-educated need non-formal and flexible ACE as their starting point and a way into formal education. However the purpose of such education was in the mind of the learner not the teacher or the provider. Community providers took a holistic view of vocational education; they linked vocational preparation with general education and the development of life skills rather than with a narrow notion of task specific training.

The study found that involvement in adult community education produces a series of outcomes for participants which go beyond personal development. Though the sampling of participants was limited, the study found that –

- 43% of participants used skills acquired through an adult education course to earn income.
- 21% of participants who were employed upon enrolment had increased their employment level as a result of adult education involvement.
- 33% of those not in the paid workforce subsequently gained employment.
- 38% of participants went on to further education.
- 51% of women who enrolled in TAFE programs in the region studied did this *via* community provided courses.

However, there were also significant personal development outcomes as well. Some 76% of respondents rated personal growth and development as an important outcome of their atten-

dance, while 39% rated their attendance as the most important opportunity for personal development. Two thirds (65%) of participants indicated that they had developed communication skills, 46% counselling skills, and over 90% felt that community providers had played an important role in their personal development.

This data was powerfully reinforced by over 50 case studies of individual learners that again illustrated the 'pathways' participants followed from ACE courses to employment, further education or training.

Merrilyn Emery (1989) reported the results of a small pilot study based on the 'Nation of Learners' data reviewed below. This study, she claims, shows that increased self confidence is an important mediating variable which has economic effects in its own right. She went on to argue that any course, which increases those psychological variables that go under the name of self confidence, worth or esteem, has a hidden or indirect effect in the economic well being of the individual and the nation. It did not matter whether the first course did or did not lead directly to a strictly vocationally oriented second course. The significant fact was that course taking leads to more course taking and more self confidence.

Rural adult education programs like 'Farm Cheque' as reported by Burfitt and Gody (1989) not only provide basic knowledge to a most under-educated sector of the adult population – only 5% of new entrants to the field had received any formal farm management training – they also provided a useful vehicle whereby the needs of farmers for further education in many business and technical areas can be highlighted. Moreover, Dorsman and Kimberley (1990) reported that rural women returning to learning that made these discoveries -

- Women need to support other women undertaking further study.
- Time spent sharing and exploring options was necessary and extremely valuable.
- The existence of community networks and information was imperative for most women to access post-secondary education.

Walsford (1989) argued that rehabilitation clients attend adult education classes for a wide range of reasons, not all of which had to

do directly with vocational interests. These reasons included: developing interests to enrich life; refining social and emotional skills; learning to speak English; preparing to enter vocational courses; and enhancing skills for employment. She went on to argue that in many important ways rehabilitation can be seen as a special case of adult education. ACE, she believed, makes a very strong contribution to the economy because of the role it plays in reintegrating people who are recovering from illness and injury into the mainstream economy.

The formal lack of recognition of the sector's contribution to Australia's education system stands in contrast to the outcomes provided for its participants. Johnson and Hinton (1986) in a study of adult and non-award continuing education made this point:

Adult Education is greatly valued by women who participate in it, and we encountered amongst them a strong sense of grievance at its low status, at the imposition of fees... at the slight financial contribution of governments compared to other sectors.

They described the outcomes obtained as involving:

... personal development and growth, awareness of social and political issues, preparation for employment and entry to further study... adult education is providing a second chance ... to overcome early disadvantage at school or lack of early educational opportunity for social or economic reasons.

It is for this reason that Australian women have participated at more than twice the rate of men for a century in adult education. This has been seemingly irrespective of the content and method of the classes, the motivation or expectation of providers and the structures through which the classes were delivered. These women took what they could get to suit their own purposes from structures over which they had no control. But, in general, they were poorly serviced by much of this provision. In the last 40 or so years, two new elements have joined long-established liberal adult education – community based education and further education. Both of these developments led to forms of adult education more attractive to

women whom Gribble refers to as its 'invisible owners' (Gribble, 1991; 1992).

No outcomes research can ignore this predominance of women as both participants and educators in ACE, nor can it ignore gender-based preferences for forms of learning. Gribble (1991, 150) called for research which would investigate the gender factor in ACE participation and remedy the 'dearth of information about the age, family responsibilities, choice of subjects and courses, financial circumstances and motivation of women participants'.

Cox and Leonard (1991) argued that many of the skills that women had acquired in everyday life were important in the workplace. They include such clusters of skills as: mediation, conflict resolution, counselling, implementing, training, persuading, nurturing, crisis management, creating a friendly ambience, sorting priorities, and developing systems.

The AAACE study, *Celebrate the Difference* (AAACE, 1991), reinforced Kimberley's findings. AAACE structured its research to identify the contribution being made by ACE providers to skills formation, the types of adult skill formation best provided by ACE, and the changes needed to achieve the sector's most relevant role in adult skill formation. In relation to neighbourhood house participants, it was found that regardless of the course studied, a pattern of individual development was evident, involving consumers entering a centre with a vague idea of learning a skill through course participation, and after one or two courses, gradually becoming more focused in their expectations, with their horizons broadening to pursue a wider range of course options. Due to their involvement in centre courses, and the interaction between learners which is encouraged by centre philosophy, personal development and social skills were accelerated, with all participants studied perceiving that they had learned to be more confident and assertive.

In addition to this increase in personal and social skill levels, centre participants were also found to have developed work-specific skills because of their involvement as volunteers in Centre Committees, office work and so on. Significant improvement in planning and decision-making skills, as well as in interper-

sonal skills, was also evident. Across all ACE providers, the AAACE study found that apart from the development of a range of expected skills (e.g. in personal development), generic skill development was also apparent, particularly in communication, planning, problem-solving, organisational and supervision skills. The report also noted that there was a lack of systems designed to recognise and document this learning, a task which must be achieved in order to locate ACE providers within the total training and education system.

The submission by the Tasmanian Association of Community Houses to the Senate Standing Committee on Employment Education and Training pointed to data gathered from a 1990 study which tracked the history and activities over five years of participants in neighbourhood house programs. A typical path of involvement began with leisure activities and child-related activities (e.g. play group, craft classes, coffee mornings). By the second year participants were likely to be attending health and fitness programs and listening to guest speakers. By the third year, participants could be expected to have become volunteers with the neighbourhood house and were either attending or planning to attend personal development courses, adult literacy courses, followed by TAFE introductory courses and basic education courses. Usually by the fourth year many had returned to or intended to return to paid employment or to obtain entry to vocationally-oriented full-time study. Such a pattern of involvement was acknowledged as representative of participants, and highlights the scope of the community sector to respond to a wide range of need.

Barnett (1993) argued that the open training and education market may well promote more competition and hence greater efficiency, but queried whether or not it would necessarily promote greater access and equity. Will the position of women in vocational education deteriorate even further? In order to achieve some equity of outcomes a number of barriers will need to be overcome and features such as the following will need to be considered in all tenders for the provision of vocational education: childcare; flexible timetabling; targets for gender balance; counselling and support services; appropriate publicity and promotion; locational constraints; and appropriate

learning environment. Additionally, recognition of prior learning and increased articulation and credit transfer will also improve the access of women. Finally, the report stresses that providers must be influenced and supported by government to address equity and access issues.

Barnett and Wilson (1994) reported case studies which focused on investigating three factors: the vocational role of ACE providers; the impact of the Training Reform Agenda on ACE providers; and the relationship between ACE providers and TAFE colleges. For all of the providers studied, it was apparent that consumer demand for skill-based programs had been increasing, while demand for recreation-based programs had decreased. This trend was seen by these providers as a response to changing economic and employment conditions, emanating largely from the recession. Accompanying the demand for courses which can enhance employment opportunities for consumers was a significant level of demand for certification of vocational courses delivered by the providers studied. This certification usually took the form of certificates of attainment issued by the providers themselves (rather than by nationally recognised authorities), and these were described by providers as being acceptable to students and to their employers. All three providers delivering vocational programs believed that the impetus for vocationally-focussed courses which comes from individual consumers was largely a response to the recession and associated problems of unemployment. Consumers were seeking courses which would enhance their employability or allow them to develop skills in new career areas.

One of the desired outcomes of a reformed training system was the development of learning pathways between training providers and across education sectors. This is a highly desirable outcome, which reduces the potential for duplication of training and learning effort and promotes flexibility in training delivery. Students interviewed for the case studies were not, it appears, attuned to these pathways, nor were they interested in pursuing them. It seemed that once a student was part of a learning system – be it TAFE or community provision – and they were content with that system (and all of those interviewed expressed

a high level of satisfaction with their particular provider), their plan was to pursue the learning opportunities offered by that provider. Community providers' students were likely to plan to undertake designated TAFE courses, after they had completed courses with their community provider. However, a pathway back from TAFE to the ACE sector was not discernible in relation to those interviewed.

While the relationship between these community providers and TAFE was one defined by co-operation, their relationship with private training providers was essentially competitive. In tendering to deliver labour market programs and to provide training for local industry, Manly-Warringah Community College, the Echuca Community Education Group and WEA (SA) were all competing with local private providers. This research is very useful in demonstrating the value of detailed case studies of several types of ACE providers serving quite different regions, and documenting the concerns which are shaping their provision. It underlines the fact that ACE is diverse in its structures and that outcomes research needs to take this 'domain' of providers into account. Provider case studies might have considerable value if they explore how providers meet the needs of their localities and relate to other VET providers, in generating vocational outcomes for their participants.

Peters (1994) in his study of the outcomes for students who had participated in adult education at the Victorian Council of Adult Education (CAE) found that more than 75% of participants were female, older than the general Australian population, more than 60% had completed 12 years of school, and almost all were from English speaking backgrounds and in some form of employment. He argued that a significant number of students enrolled for skills development reasons. These skills were across vocational, further educational and personal areas. The responses of students to questions asked would need further explanation to identify more fully what were the particular outcomes for each of them. While a major purpose of this study was to investigate pathways from adult education, this research confirmed that many students participate in adult education for largely personal development reasons. This was not a surprising finding

given the demographic make up of the sample of participants.

Finally, this review needs to draw attention to studies that highlight the scope of adult community education. As the sector has expanded, research has developed more interest in mapping the sector. Brown, Gillam and O'Connell (1994) in a study for BACE in NSW tried to establish the extent of adult community education beyond the 104 providers funded in some way by the Board. Their data suggests some conservative estimates of the complete picture of adult community education in the State. ACE is provided by some 500 non-government organisations which provide courses for half a million adults. Case studies of selected LGAs suggested there was a greater extent and complexity of provision than found by the survey. Importantly, the largest providers were those recognised by the Board. This study highlights the fact that the current research is limited to the Board-funded providers, which are the largest agencies, and provide over half the estimated courses covering the widest range of subject fields.

Many of the studies cited above collected information from recent or current participants. They tell us more about course experiences and outcomes but little about the extent of course-taking in the Australian population. This has been the contribution of the national population survey known as the 'Nation of Learners' study and its successor (Evans, 1987, 1993). This study has had a policy impact that has obscured a lack of conceptual rigour.

Thus the finding of this research that 'six out of ten Australians participate in adult education' has been widely cited, for example in Johnson and Hinton (1986) and the Senate Report (Aulich, 1991) and the study has helped to raise awareness of the social and economic outcomes of ACE participation. Another oft-cited finding of Evans is that an additional year of formal education added a further \$867 to an individual's annual gross income, each bridging or preparatory course taken added an additional \$546 in gross annual earnings, and that each job-related course added an average of \$1,100 in gross annual income.

This study also illustrates the main weaknesses of past quantitative research on

ACE outcomes. This is a lack of clarity in defining the distinct ‘domains’ involved in ACE participation (courses, providers and learners) and the basic conceptual categories which underlie quantification of outcomes. Thus, the national data did not exclude from ‘an adult education course’ the past participation in TAFE, inflating the real extent of adult education participation as it is usually understood. Current research has consequently seen the need to define key categories such as ‘course’ and ‘provider’ and ‘outcome’ in clear and consistent ways.

Recent work on vocational outcomes in NSW (McIntyre, Morris and Tennant, 1993) set out to provide a stronger conceptual framework for studying ACE outcomes and used a range of methodologies to bring out dimensions of the vocational contribution of ACE. It analysed issues and provided data from the perspectives of courses, providers and learners, including a sample-survey of 2157 participants in 25 providers. This research builds on the earlier work and is referred to throughout this report. At the same time, ACFEB in Victoria has completed nationally-funded three-state research on ‘Pathways and Outcomes’ which shares several features with current study (ACFEB, in progress). The strength of the Victorian study is its comprehensive specification of a range of ‘outcomes’ of ACE courses. This study is referred to further in the Technical Report.

In summary, this review of the literature suggests that –

- Policy research in ACE is expected to provide more compelling evidence of outcomes, that can describe populations of ACE learners rather than individuals, and this requires research that is more analytical and quantitative.
- Research needs to be conceptually rigorous and clarify the different domains to be explored in outcomes research. There is a need to bring out the relationships between the characteristics of learners, their courses and outcomes and the agencies providing these courses.
- Outcomes depend to some degree on the standpoint from which outcomes are evaluated, and therefore research should reflect and explore different perspectives – those of

the learner, the provider, employers and the ‘communities’ ACE agencies serve.

- Sample surveys of participants should be complemented by structured case studies of local providers which document how ‘community-based’ providers do their work, and in particular, how they interpret and meet the needs of their locality.

Defining Vocational Outcome

Against this background, the research faces the task of defining the concept of a vocational outcome. The definition of ‘vocational education and training’ in ACE adopted by *The Vocational Scope of ACE* provided a starting point:

Educational activity that promotes the acquisition of competence – in terms of knowledge, skills, understandings, attitudes and values – which contributes to productive work (McIntyre, Morris and Tennant, 1993, 15).

This definition was the result of an analysis of a range of definitions of VET in the literature, and is consistent with those of the National Training Board and the Mayer Committee who defined VET in broad terms:

Vocational Education and Training refers to post-compulsory education or training which is directed to the development of competencies, or is preparatory to, or is directed to the enhancement of opportunities for such education and training up to and including para-professional education and training (NTB, 1992, 61).

The Committee has adopted a broad definition of competence which recognises that performance is underpinned not only by skill but also by knowledge and understanding, and that competence involves both the ability to perform in a given context and the capacity to transfer knowledge and

skills to new tasks and situations.
(Mayer, 1992, 4)

From this premise, it is obvious that 'vocational outcome' also needs to be defined in broad rather than narrow terms. Too narrow a concept of what is 'vocational' – such as the traditional concept of vocational education as preparation for a specific occupation – restricts the range of consequences that can count as valid outcomes of education and training, and tends to defeat the objective of transferable knowledge and skill.

'Outcome' itself appears to be a simple concept – 'visible effect, practical result or product' as the Shorter Oxford Dictionary has it. Yet defining 'vocational outcome' in education and training is more complex, since what constitutes the 'outcome' is a matter of judgment about the nature of the educational experience and its components of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. That judgment is made from some value-position about what the experience is, what it should 'produce' and how this should be assessed. As the Senate Standing Committee Report on ACE emphasised, what constitutes an outcome will depend on what perspective is taken on the educational activity, according to whether the vantage point is that of the learner, the provider, the funding authority or an industry association (Aulich, 1991, 76). It noted that narrowly instrumental views of 'outcomes driven education' can be self-defeating in restricting what counts as a worthwhile result of the educational process, (1991, 82).

The nub of the issue is what course consequences are counted as valid outcomes of vocational education and training, and who decides 'what counts'. The currently accepted national definitions of VET clearly come down on the side of a wide spectrum of outcomes, compatible with the broad idea of competence, and this is the consistent thread of recent policy, for example, in the ESFC Second Report (1993).

The definition of a 'vocational outcome' in this report therefore aims to be consistent with this position on vocational education and training and our earlier definition –

a 'vocational outcome' of an ACE course is any consequence of participating in a course that promotes the

acquisition of competence – in terms of knowledge, skills, understandings, attitudes and values – which contributes to productive work.

This definition then creates a further problem of specifying the types of outcomes which meet this broad criterion. As we have noted earlier, the task for research documenting vocational outcomes in any part of the VET system (not only ACE) is better conceptualisation. The conceptual task raises some difficult issues, such as the following:

- Outcome usually assumes a *benefit* of some kind to the learner or other interested party. Thus the Senate Report did not strictly define 'outcome' but referred to a range of benefits of participation in ACE, judged from several standpoints, such as the cost-effectiveness of ACE to government. Our framework embodies the idea of an 'expected benefit' that is realised by the learner through participation in VET.
- In ACE, vocational outcome is therefore not simply the product of 'motive to enrol', a view that can be criticised as a one-dimensional view of adult course-taking. Our research assumes a more complex view in which the learner makes a decision to enrol, weighing the expected benefits of participation against its perceived costs. Our model suggests that it is important to account for *participation in ACE* as well as describe its outcomes.
- Vocational outcomes are relative to the perspective adopted. From what has already been said, the consequences which are nominated as *valid and significant* outcomes will depend on what benefits are expected from vocational education and training. These will vary with the different interests that have a stake in the VET system.

With these considerations in mind, the research develops a pluralist conceptual framework that looks at vocational outcomes from several perspectives, and which may highlight different types of outcome. To explore this further and foreshadow the later discussion of 'perspectives', an attempt has been made in Table 2.1 to suggest categories of outcome most relevant for each of the four perspectives represented in the study. It can be noted that the

Table 2.1 Examples of Vocational Outcome in ACE

I. Participant perspective:

1. Course increases employability or earning capacity

e.g. helps to upgrade skills for current job or business; improves performance in different areas of work; helps to find employment or change current job or business; increases job security or career prospects

2. Course increases skills, knowledge or understanding

e.g. introduces or expands subject knowledge; improves generic skills in key competencies that enable ‘learning to learn’; prepares for or assists with other studies

3. Course promotes competence in the home and community

e.g. involves person in community activities; provides skills useful in the household and home; assists in the person becoming a better partner, parent or carer; develops the ability to participate, take committed action

4. Course promotes personal and social development

e.g. develops self-confidence, personal skills; helps to make social contacts; assists in adjustment to separation, loss of partner or relative; promotes the exploration of a new interest, and broadening of horizons; promotes the life-relevance of learning in adulthood

II. Skills Perspective:

1. Course promotes skill formation in the workplace

e.g. enhances job-specific knowledge; improves generic skills in key competencies or enables ‘learning to learn’; improves performance in different areas of work

2. Course promotes skill formation in certain occupational groups

e.g. promotes the expansion of middle level skills

3. Courses assists to raise participation of ‘target groups’ in the labour force and raises their skill levels

e.g. decreases gender segregation of the workforce; promotes cultural diversity in the workplace; increases access of groups disadvantaged in the labour market.

III. Industry Perspective

1. Course promotes the development of skills in demand by industry

e.g. promotes the expansion of middle level skills; promotes the acquisition of skills in demand, such as computing skills

2. Courses assists in meeting the training needs of an industry group

e.g. promotes the access of small business to training; assists enterprises to develop appropriate skills in their workforce

3. Course assists in meeting the demands of the local labour market

Table 2.1 (continued)

IV. Rural and Regional Perspective
<p>1. Course provides access to education and training in the local area e.g. promotes participation per se, in isolated areas where learning opportunities are limited</p>
<p>2. Course completion facilitates access to further education and training e.g. an introductory course is loosely or formally articulated with related courses in other VET institutions</p>
<p>3. Course assists participants to manage the effects of joblessness in areas of high unemployment and increases income earning capacity</p>

outcome stated in one perspective could in many cases also belong in another, and that this list is not necessarily exhaustive. The point of the table is to promote a more comprehensive approach to researching outcomes, one that recognises a range of benefits from participation in ACE.

As our earlier study argued, (McIntyre et al, 1993) there is a continuum from *direct* vocational outcomes, such as the application of a skill in the workplace and increased labour market mobility to those *indirect* outcomes related to entry to the labour force or to further education or training. Research on outcomes in ACE, more than any other part of the Australian vocational training framework brings into focus the issue of lifelong learning and its relationship to employment-related outcomes. ANTA states, as one of its continuing National Goals, the promotion of lifelong learning. The research, in taking a broad view of vocational outcomes, explores how participants perceive the life-relevance of courses, as well as their employment-relatedness.

Dimensions of Vocational Outcome

A sound conceptual framework is needed to begin the task of quantifying the vocational outcomes in ACE. Broadly speaking, a vocational outcome is the application of a course by a learner to a given context of work. Our conceptual model (Figure 2.1) sees at least four things as necessary in describing an outcome -

- the *learning itself* – the specific knowledge or skill gained from the course. This can be classified by knowledge area (coded as course field of study), its level, or by type of generic skill, classified in terms of the 'Area of Work' it contributes to (ESFC, 1994) or in terms of the Mayer Key Competencies.
- the *context to which the learning is applied* – the application of that learning in a workplace or other situation. Work situation

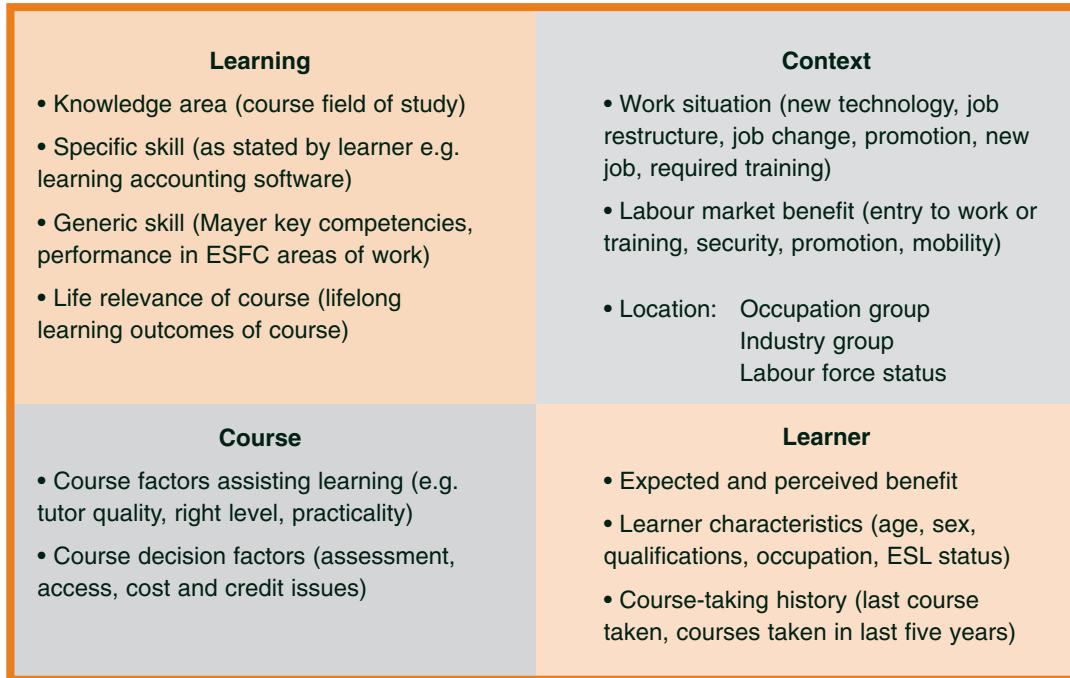


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Model for Vocational Outcome

also refers to the main purpose of the learner applying the course to their work, for example, learning about software required by new office technology. Context is also described in terms of the *location* of this work situation in various employment, occupation and industry categories.

- the *characteristics of learners* reporting the outcome. As well as the age, sex, and educational history of learners, the research examines the labour force characteristics of learners including their occupation group and industry.
- the *course features* that may produce the outcome – what learners perceive to be the factors which assist their learning and what they see as issues affecting the quality of their learning, such as the practicality of learning and its assessment and recognition.

In summary, a range of descriptors can be used to document a vocational outcome in ACE – the skills acquired, occupational and labour market context, course type, and learner background.

The research takes a number of perspectives on the vocational outcomes of ACE courses. Outcomes are first to be viewed from the individual perspective – what participants see as the results of their participation in ACE courses. This has been the dominant way in which outcomes have been researched, as the literature review makes clear. Outcomes can also be assessed in terms of the occupational skills that are acquired by learners and how this relates to our understanding of skill formation. This is the skills perspective. The industry perspective focuses on how ACE is meeting the needs of employers. Finally, in order to appreciate how outcomes may differ from region to region in the state, a regional perspective can be taken on outcomes.

The Participant Perspective

As the literature review demonstrates, vocational outcomes of ACE courses have

mainly been researched from the participant perspective, and our conceptual model has this focus.

The participant perspective emphasises adult learners' perceptions of their courses, the benefits they expect and actually gain. Past research on participation in ACE has been limited by its preoccupation with the psychological motivations of learners, especially in the North American tradition (Courtney, 1992). Whatever the drawbacks of the 'instrumentalism' of the vocational emphasis for adult education (see Bagnall, 1994), it has pressed researchers to make a more comprehensive study of participation – one that takes into account the nature of the course, the learners' expectations and the context to which learning is applied.

In our conceptual model, motive or expectation is but one factor in a 'cost-benefit' equation which brings a learner to ACE. The ACE participant makes a decision to enrol, weighing up the perceived costs of learning (including fees and personal 'opportunity costs') against the expected benefits of learning (including intrinsic learning gain and the extrinsic benefits at work or in other situations), given the motive to enrol in a particular course. The *Vocational Scope of ACE* showed clearly that the nature of the course was a key factor differentiating learners and their purposes. It argued that the 'knowledge dimension' was crucial in understanding ACE's vocational role and in combatting the myth of ACE as merely 'recreational learning'.

Researching the participant perspective will –

- provide further information about the profile of ACE participants, especially their occupation, industry of employment and labour force status
- explore how learners see their courses applying to their work situation, such as assisting with the introduction of new technology, and the labour market benefits of courses
- examine employment-related outcomes compared to lifelong learning outcomes
- develop a view of participation in ACE that takes into account expected benefit, the

nature of the course itself, the life situation and work context of the learner

- identify what relationships exist between types of skill outcome, type of ACE courses and learner characteristics

The Skills Perspective

The ESFC Second Report 'Raising the Standard' is significant for ACE because it has emphasised the augmenting of middle level skills through a range of provision including short courses. The *Vocational Scope of ACE* showed (1993, 65) that more than a third of students report they hold middle level qualifications (ASF 4 – 6) and a further third a degree or diploma.

The ESFC Report views ACE as part of a diverse framework of vocational education and training made up of 'seven systems [representing] a tremendous range and diversity of approaches' (1993, 62). This recognition of ACE is significant for the emphasis that the Council gives to the provision of VET provided in informal ways – that is, not leading to formal awards. The Council emphasises the 'second chance' role of ACE (1993, 62) and the need to create links between the parts of the framework to ensure pathways are available for larger numbers of people to achieve middle levels skills.

The research therefore needs to explore what linkages are being made with formal providers of VET, especially the TAFE system. It will do this in part through the regional and local case studies reported in relation to the 'regional perspective'.

The Second ESFC report squarely challenges ACE to show how its short courses might contribute to the formation of competence at work. Significantly, it endorses *generic competencies* as important outcomes of VET, alongside specific technical competencies (ESFC, 1993,45). Providers in the 1993 research stated that they saw generic skills as one of the main sources of ACE's vocational relevance, in contrast to TAFE's focus on specific occupational skills. The research emphasised this dimension of outcome, and aimed to determine

how courses develop the Mayer Key Competencies in the areas of communication and using technology.

The ESFC report (1993, 43) also recommends that generic skills be thought of in terms of four areas of work where skills are applied. 'Broadbased-technical' requirements for work refer to a skills and knowledge base broad enough to allow adaptation to new tasks. 'Work team social' refers to a range of abilities to work with others and aligns closely to several of the Mayer competencies. 'Accountability-self-management' refers to '... a capacity to take initiatives where necessary and appropriate and take consequent responsibility for such actions... every employee is managing to some extent...'. The final aspect is 'Thinking-Cognitive' and refers to the ability to learn continuously and 'apply that learning in new situations'. This framework gives another way of defining generic skills as outcomes of ACE courses.

The policy context therefore suggests a shift away from understanding vocational outcomes mainly in terms of specific occupational skills. Skill formation in the workplace is increasingly being seen in terms of lifelong learning – a concept first articulated in the Kangan Report on TAFE twenty years ago (Kangan, 1975). The lifelong learning concept directs attention to the 'life-relevance' of courses and how these relate to vocational learning and skill outcomes.

Thus the research aims to explore outcomes from a skills perspective by –

- analysing vocational outcomes of ACE courses as they contribute to skill formation in generic terms
- establishing what generic skills are outcomes of ACE courses and establish how these outcomes are related to course, learner and occupational and labour force factors
- examining how learners see their acquisition of skill enhancing their development as lifelong learners, and how skill formation is assisted by a lifelong learning orientation.

The Industry Perspective

Because participant and provider perspective have dominated research on the outcomes of ACE, little work has been done to establish the ways in which ACE meets the needs of industry. To remedy this lack of an industry perspective is a major challenge for the research.

The State Training Profile (STP) establishes a planning framework for VET in NSW. For ACE to be placed firmly in the larger VET picture, the sector must demonstrate its outcomes in terms of industry, occupation and employment. The State Training Profile's priorities indicate some areas in which this needs to be done – for example, showing how ACE is responsive to industry and student demand, how it works in partnership with other providers to enhance learner pathways or plays a role in assisting groups with specific training needs (1995 STP, 11 – 13).

The research develops an industry perspective on the vocational outcomes of ACE in a number of ways by –

- describing the occupational and industry profile of ACE participants
- gathering data on the training roles ACE is performing, including customised training and contract training
- profiling the employers who use ACE for their training through both general courses and custom training
- documenting the views of employers on training policies and their knowledge of and attitudes to ACE courses.

Earlier research showed that over 70% of participants are likely to be in some form of employment (McIntyre et al, 1992, 64). A prime aim of the research is therefore, to establish what occupational groups in the labour force are currently using ACE courses, and to describe their industry of employment and labour force status. It is also important to examine the labour market benefits of participation in ACE which might range from entry to employment to including increased job security, job mobility or career prospects.

The ESFC Second Report noted that employment growth is occurring mainly in smaller

enterprises. It is important to know what role ACE might be playing in training for small business. ACE appears to make a 'hidden contribution' to training small business, but this training role is less visible because employees enrol of their own volition and employers are not directly involved. The *Vocational Scope of ACE* supports an estimate of 13% or over 30,000 enrolments in any one year being self-employed (McIntyre et al, 1993, 64). The potential contribution is significant given that *Raising the Standard* noted that most employment growth is now occurring in small to medium enterprises (ESFC, 13ff). These employers are less likely than large businesses to use formal training.

Thus the research aims to establish which employers use ACE courses for training purposes, and profile them in terms of their size, industry, location and courses attended. The current ABS Employer Training Practices survey (ABS, 1994a, 21) found that the most common external providers used for training were TAFE (46%), private providers (39%), an industry association (29%), professional association (24%) or equipment supplier (27%). The survey supports the view that training becomes more formalised with increasing size of employing organisation. It is very likely that this ABS survey under-estimates the role of local ACE providers since 'Community providers' were not apparently counted as providing training. This suggests that small scale local training is being missed by such surveys.

A household survey of Training and Education Experience (ABS, 1994b,36) did include 'community or adult education centre' as an external provider. It estimated that in Australia in 1993 half as many persons (85,700) had completed some external training in such a centre. More were trained in an 'educational institution' (166,300) or by a 'training consultant' (164,700), and most (217,100) through an industry or professional association. The survey showed that these ACE centres mainly provided computing, managerial and professional and 'other' kinds of courses. This suggests a rather different picture of the role of community providers than the previous survey. The problem may be that ACE providers are still not recognised (by

employers or the ABS) as part of the training market.

It is possible that ACE is performing several industry training roles including augmenting formal qualifications as well as 'mediating' entry to formal training. The ESFC report highlighted the concept of different training roles within a 'networked' training market. Learners are seen as moving from one provider to another 'adding value' to their qualifications (ESFC, 1994, 57).

Because of the high proportion of ACE participants known to hold post-school qualifications, ACE's role is not mainly 'second chance' education, though this is the ESFC view. However, it is important to ask how the 'unqualified third' might be using ACE to access middle level skills. ACE has a role in providing 'targeted' labour market programs. The *Vocational Scope of ACE* report indicated that while half the surveyed providers had not applied for any kind of DEET funding, many of the larger providers earned up to 30% of turnover from special programs (McIntyre et al, 1993, 45ff). The research provides some evidence of this contract training.

Customised training refers to courses tailored to employer demands. The research examines this area of provision, since it reveals insights into employer training needs and the capacity of ACE to respond quickly and flexibly.

The Regional and Rural Perspective

Because ACE has a significant presence in rural areas, its vocational outcomes must also be assessed from a regional and rural perspective, establishing how ACE plays a role in meeting local and regional needs for vocational education and training outside the major cities. The major policy documents, including the 1995 NSW State Training Profile and *Working Nation*, emphasise the importance of regional economic development and planning VET to ensure that regional needs are identified and provided for.

In the last twenty years, numerous reports have highlighted the educational needs of adults in rural areas and made recommendations on how best to provide for these needs. ACE has been at the forefront of a very significant development of community-based education, through the growth of the CAECs, the development of the community college model in TAFE and its adoption in ACE. For some years there has been a recognition of the importance of regional development in setting vocational education and training needs (e.g. the Green Triangle report) and more recently the Federal policy document *Regional Development*. The needs of rural Australia, in the context of training reform, have been outlined in the NBEET national strategy for VET in rural areas (NBEET, 1991).

Providers have long argued that the outcomes of ACE are different in rural areas. *The Vocational Scope of ACE* found that small centres said that their courses had economic outcomes such as income supplementation, self-sufficiency, self-employment and small business activity, and suggested that documenting these was a task for research (McIntyre et al, 1993, 54ff).

The research provides an opportunity to place provision in its local and regional context, to examine in detail how providers in country areas complete the overall picture of VET provision. A later section of the report (Chapter Five) reviews the literature and describes the 'regional and rural perspective' touching such factors as the nature of the rural economy, diversity across and within rural areas and the way in which local and regional identity creates specific needs for vocational education and training.

In summary, the regional perspective on ACE –

- explores how the vocational outcomes achieved by ACE providers correspond to local and regional needs for vocational education and training
- analyses the provision of selected colleges which have become recognised leaders in providing vocational courses in ACE in relation to the social and economic profile of their region
- establishes to what extent ACE providers

co-ordinate their activities with TAFE and other providers such as Skillshare to ensure they together provide a range of opportunities for VET

- assesses the extent to which ACE targets the VET needs of specific occupations or labour force target groups eg. in assisting with re-entry to the workforce for women in country areas, given the high participation of women in ACE
- identifies problems and issues in CAECs and community colleges in achieving vocational outcomes in their provision.

The research methodology

There are many difficulties which face research that attempts to document the vocational outcomes of ACE courses. Not only is the research base as yet poorly developed but the Australian research on vocational education and training *in general* is still relatively young. The lack of a research base results in at least three challenges for the researcher:

- To resolve the technical difficulties of studying ACE participation in ways that provide useful data about the developing role of ACE in VET. These technical difficulties include sampling and survey logistics in a widely dispersed ACE learner population and the problems of quantifying relationships where few good conceptual models exist.
- To ensure that the quantification of outcomes does not over-simplify the complexity of the context in which learners achieve outcomes in ACE. Quantification is inherently a reductionist enterprise and survey methodology needs to be complemented by interpretive studies which bring out the complex realities of the context of participation.
- To recognise that there are different value positions on ACE and its developing contribution to the VET system, and assist in 'surfacing' the sometimes conflicting perspectives inherent in the training reform agenda and its impact on learners and providers alike. An important role of

research is in documenting the issues as they are perceived by different parties – participants, providers, policy-makers and employers.

Our earlier report, *The Vocational Scope of ACE*, attempted to bring more rigour to the study of ACE’s vocational relevance. The current research is more ambitious in scope and method and emphasises the quantification of the relationships. At the same time, it aims to achieve a balance between quantitative and qualitative approaches through case studies

which explore the context of provision in a holistic and interpretive way. Several methods are employed to document vocational outcomes of ACE from the four perspectives:

- the cornerstone of the research is a large-scale sample-survey of participants and their skills perspective, sampling some 3400 participants across 40 providers stratified by size and locality. The analysis highlights relationships between the key variables already described – including outcome-type, course area, course features, work

Table 2.2 Perspectives and Research Methodologies

<p>Participants:</p> <p>Expected benefits, age, sex, employment status, ethnicity, Aboriginality, residence, prior and concurrent course-taking.</p> <p>Work context: Occupation, industry, sector, job prospects, workplace situation.</p> <p>Courses: Field of study, course features assisting learning, course choice factors.</p>	<p>Sample survey of ACE participants (n=3417) in 40 providers stratified by size.</p> <p>Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis using loglinear modelling.</p>
<p>Skills:</p> <p>Outcome type – generic skills – and areas of work. Occupational profile of ACE participants.</p> <p>Workplace and course factors as stated.</p>	<p>Sample survey of ACE participants (as above).</p>
<p>Industry:</p> <p>Employers: Industry group, workforce size and turnover, location, sector, training needs in terms of Mayer key competencies, courses, area of training, training support policies.</p>	<p>Provider focus group, college database analysis, employer telephone interviews and employer mail survey</p>
<p>Regional and Rural:</p> <p>Providers: Size, locality, growth, course profile, course initiatives, funding, strategic goals, links to other agencies.</p> <p>Locality analysis – social and economic indicators.</p>	<p>Two regional college studies: Central West and Central Coast Community Colleges. Five small centre studies: Kiama, Bellingen, Griffith, Cooma, Walcha.</p> <p>Community profiling using census data. Field visits, document analysis, interviews with providers, regional ACE officers and community representatives.</p>

situation and occupation, industry, employment status and learner variables. Chapter Three reports this data.

- to establish the industry perspective, a range of methods is used – focus groups of providers, case studies of customised courses, analysis of statistical data, college records, database development and employer telephone interviews and mail survey. The research describes the sector's involvement in labour market and contract-training. Chapter Four reports this data.
- the regional perspective is explored using both quantitative and interpretive methods. It uses community profiling methodology to interpret the social and economic context of

ACE as a basis for structured case studies of two regions and five small centres. The studies document the outcomes of courses from interviews with providers and community representatives. Chapter Five reports these studies.

Table 2.2 summarises the activities which comprised the project and the key variables associated with each of the four perspectives on ACE vocational outcomes:

Throughout the report, technical details of the methodology have been kept to a minimum. Further details of the research activities can be found in the Technical Notes which are published separately.

ACE Participants and Their Skills

TO EXPLORE THE VOCATIONAL OUTCOMES of ACE courses from the perspective of participants, the researchers conducted a sample-survey of 3417 people enrolled in 40 providers across the State. These were participants in the general program, that is, those publicly advertised courses open to enrolment to the community on a fee-paying basis. Respondents identified themselves as having done an ACE course in 1992 or later. They were asked about the expected and actual benefits of the past course, their experience of the course, its outcomes in terms of generic and specific skills, and its workplace and life relevance. They also gave details of their occupation and employment, educational qualifications, past course-taking and other characteristics. Chapter Two outlined some of the key issues in surveying participants about their perceptions of outcome.

The findings of the survey are, in summary:

- The profile of ACE participants is very similar to that of earlier surveys – participants

are disproportionately female (76%), younger (71% aged between 20 – 50 years), in paid employment of some kind (73%) and hold some form of post-school qualification (62%). More were born in Australia (77%) and fewer (12%) spoke a language other than English.

- Participants are clearly subject-centred in their expectations of the course, expecting to explore or extend their knowledge of the subject, with nearly half (47%) stating this as their primary expectation. A significant number (total 17%) had a primary expectation of a direct benefit to their work
- ACE participants appear satisfied that the course fulfilled their expectations. The great majority report that the course had ‘helped them a lot’ (77%) or ‘a little’ (18%).
- The occupational profile of ACE participants can be summed up as a skilled workforce in which the professional, para-professional and clerical occupations dominate, the managerial, and sales occupations

are comparable to NSW, and tradespersons, machine operators and labourers are under-represented.

- Twelve (12) minor occupational groups account for over 60% of employed respondents, among them schoolteachers, stenographers and typists, general clerks, business professionals, sales assistants, personal service workers and registered nurses.
- Middle level skill qualifications are held by over a third of the sample (1239 or 36.3%) and include the quarter of the sample (28.4%) who hold an 'Other Certificate'.
- Among ACE participants, half the men are concentrated in managerial, professional and trades occupations (total 49.8%) while one third of women are in clerical and sales groups. However, ACE caters for a significant group of women holding higher and middle level occupations since over a quarter of the women are in either managerial (7.3%) or professional (19.7%) occupations and there are equal proportions of men and women in the para-professional occupations.
- More than a third (38%) of the employed ACE participants work in community services, with manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade and public administration employing another third.
- Over 60% of those working are employed in private companies, twice the number employed in the public sector (30%), and a small proportion (9%) in the community sector.

In regard to the vocational outcomes of their past course, the survey showed that ACE participants report skill outcomes from their past courses in generic rather than specific terms:

- There were clear differences among the Mayer key competencies as 'areas' in which skill had improved, with more respondents nominating communicating (31%), using technology (19%), and cultural understanding (18%) than other areas. This trend was closely associated with the type of course taken and the kind of benefit

expected from the course, rather than the occupation or industry group of the participant,

- Participants responded that the past course had helped them to 'perform their work better' in the 'areas of work' defined by the ESFC Second Report such as 'gaining relevant skills or knowledge' (22%) or 'improving thinking skills, problem solving' (18%). Again, the trend to respond in this way is related more to type of course and expected benefit than to occupation or industry group.
- A majority of participants did not see the past course as assisting their job prospects, for example, by helping them become more secure in the job, gaining promotion, moving to another job or expanding business. Fewer than 30% saw that workplace changes (such as new technology being introduced) as influencing their enrolment.
- The main way in which the past course has 'life relevance' for participants is overwhelmingly in 'exploring an interest and broadening horizons' than in personal-social, employment-related or social and community outcomes, and this is consistent with their expectations and reporting of generic skills.
- Three key competencies stand out, when loglinear modelling is used to explain the sample's response to these outcomes. Communicating, using technology and planning and organising were all straightforwardly explained by the type of course taken. The other key competencies were related in complex ways to a range of participant factors.

Survey Design

An outcomes survey needs to reach the population of ACE students that have done an ACE course before and ask them about their expectations and perceptions of the experience. The

approach taken must resolve the considerable logistical problems in reaching past students.

The strategy adopted was to identify participants in present courses who had done a past course anywhere in ACE and ask them to report on its perceived outcomes.¹ A past course was defined as an ACE course done in 1992, 1993 or 1994 in any ACE provider – an evening or community college, a WEA or adult education centre, but not a TAFE college or university. The questionnaire ‘Are Our Courses Working For You?’ is found at Appendix 2.

Though there are some disadvantages to this approach, it represents the most convenient and cost effective one, given the short-time frame of the project. The strategy was based on the knowledge that as many as 40% of ACE participants in any term have enrolled in ACE in the previous five years (McIntyre et al, 1993). ‘Recurring participation’ is a feature of ACE participation that can be validly utilised in sampling outcomes. The main disadvantage is that it misses the ‘once-only’ participants who may well enrol because of an immediate training need. Thus the present survey underestimates the vocational outcomes of courses such as computing where once-only enrolments are thought to be common. This bias can, however, be partly checked by referring to our earlier 1993 survey which provided benchmark data on ACE participation in NSW (McIntyre et al, 1993).

The survey form itself (Appendix 2) was designed to minimise the demands on fee-paying students and class tutors and to be completed and collected within ten minutes during class in order to maximise the response rate. For this reason response categories were kept simple and complex ranking devices or multiple routes through the questionnaire were avoided. The survey collected information about five main groups of variables consistent with the conceptual model of outcomes (see Chapter Two). These were, in summary –

- Expected and actual benefits (Questions 3 – 5). For example, Question 3 asked respondents to state one or more ways in which they had expected the course to help them and provided 11 types of expectation. These

categories were comparable with the Victorian study (ACFEB, in progress). A further question sought the extent to which expectations were realised.

- Outcomes (Questions 6, 7, 10, 11, 17, 18). Participants were asked about outcomes in both generic and specific skills, and relevance to work and life challenges. For example, Question 7 asked them to state in which, if any, areas ‘the course had improved skills’ and provided categories based on the Mayer Key Competencies. Question 10 asked about lifelong learning outcomes defined in terms of 11 categories, such as ‘Becoming more independent or self-confident’.
- Work Context (Questions 12-16, 19). A further set of questions sought information about participants’ occupation, industry, sector of employment and labour force status and asked them (Question 19) how far course choice was influenced by changes in their workplace.
- Course Features (Questions 8-9, 20-22). The survey canvassed some aspects of the course experience which might be related to any vocational outcomes reported. For example, it was important to know what features of the course (for example its length, tutor quality) were most valued by participants (Question 8). Question 9 canvassed some possible factors in the participant’s decision to enrol.
- Participant Characteristics (Questions 23-30). Finally the questionnaire sought a standard range of information about the individual including sex, age, ethnicity, education qualification and past course-taking. The response categories were those adopted by the Victorian study.

It is important to note that the survey struck a balance between an emphasis on work-related outcomes and broader outcomes reflecting the interests of all participants including those not in the workforce. There were opportunities for participants to respond that a particular outcome was not applicable (for example, because they ‘had not worked since taking the course’). Since it is women who

make up 75% of the ACE population, the survey also explored (Question 16) data on those who state they are 'working at home'.

Sampling

The sampling model was based on experience with the 1993 Survey of ACE Learners (McIntyre et al, 1993, 60 -87). It aimed for a large sample of students (in excess of 5000) across half the Board's 75 Main Providers who were stratified into three classes of large, medium and small according to their 1993 share of annual enrolments. Classes were sampled in proportion to this enrolment share. Thus the largest providers were sent three-quarters of the forms, and the medium and small providers some 14% and 11% respectively. Ten thousand (10,000) forms were distributed to approximately 2000 classes in 40 providers (Table 3.1).

The main logistical problem with such a survey is reaching the large number of tutors who are in a position to ask past students to

identify themselves and complete the form. The solution adopted was a 'Class Envelope' containing instructions and an average of five forms for the students who had been past participants. The batched Class Envelopes were sent to Principals and Co-ordinators ready for distribution to eligible students in the sixth week of Term 3 (early September 1994). Class Envelopes were then collected and returned together to UTS. The number of class envelopes sent was negotiated with all 40 Principals and Co-ordinators depending on the number of tutors they could readily contact. A large provider such as the Sydney WEA, for example, took some 200 class envelopes and a medium provider such as Northern Rivers, 50 envelopes.

Despite the co-operation of the ACE centres, the overall response rate was lower than expected (Table 3.1) though 3417 is regarded as adequate. There were a number of reasons for the lower response than in the 1993 Survey. First, its timing late in Term 3 meant that many shorter classes had already concluded, reducing the potential pool of classes especially in the smaller providers. Secondly, the logistical difficulties in reaching all tutors in the

Table 3.1 Sample and Response for Survey of Participants (n=3417)

Provider Class	Enrolment Share	Sampled n	Sent (%)	Returned (%)	Response rate (%)
Large providers	74%	11	7425 (73.8)	2716 (79.5)	36.6
Medium providers	18%	10	1455 (14.5)	586 (17.1)	40.3
Small providers	8%	19	1180 (11.7)	115 (2.9)	9.8
Total	100%	40	10,060	3417	34.4

	1994 Sample %	NSW 1991 %	1993 Survey %
Women	76.2	50.1	76.7
In paid employment	72.7	53.9	71.0
Hold a post-school qualification	62.4	41.2	73.0
Aged between 20 -50	70.9	42.0	76.1
Aboriginal TSI	1.3	1.2	na
Born Overseas	23.1	25.2	24.5
Speak a LOTE at home	12.4	17.1	9.7

Table 3.2 Characteristics of the Sample of ACE Participants

multiple venues clearly reduced the number of Class Envelopes returned from larger Colleges. Third, the returns indicated the researchers had over-estimated the number of returning participants in most Term 3 present classes.

It has to be borne in mind that the strategy was to sample *past courses* through present participants. It is also important to note that the survey sampled participants in the *general program*, that is, those publicly advertised courses open to enrolment to the community on a fee-paying basis, and did not attempt to reach people enrolled in targeted programs such as literacy, labour market training and special courses for disabled people, (though some participants reported their past course in this area). The validity of the survey depends on how far the classes sampled reflect the ACE Course Profile (McIntyre et al, 1993, 22). As the later section shows, there is a good approximation to this profile with some over-representation of those courses which run longer, such as language courses.

A limitation of the sampling is that it under-represents the small Community Adult Education Centres and thus the findings will reflect more the pattern of outcomes in the

large and medium providers. Finally, as noted before, the survey samples the perceptions of returning participants rather than all past participants.

The ACE Participant Profile

The survey confirms the picture of ACE participants drawn from previous surveys. They are disproportionately female (76%) younger (71% aged between 20 – 50 years), in paid employment of some kind (73%) and hold some form of post-school qualification (62%). In all these respects, the sample differs markedly from the NSW population as a whole – participants are in sum, more likely to be female, qualified and employed than other NSW residents.

In other ways, the sample is more comparable to NSW as a whole (Table 3.3). More were born in Australia (77%) or an anglophone country and fewer (12%) spoke a language other than English at home, though the percentage is still quite large. The survey found

that Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people are represented in ACE courses in proportion to their numbers in the NSW population (Table 3.2).

The 1994 sample has characteristics which closely parallel those of our earlier survey which sampled 2517 Term 1 students in 257 classes in 25 providers stratified by size. The 1994 sample is less qualified and marginally older. Some 22% are aged 50 years or over compared with the 20% reported in 1993. There appear to be only marginal differences between men and women in their age, qualifications, employment and other factors.

The Past Course

Participants were asked to respond to questions about outcomes in terms of a course they had completed in 1992 or later. The courses were classified in terms of the ACE common course areas. The proportions of participants in each course area were comparable to the 1993 ACE Course Profile (McIntyre et al, 1993, 23) with some exceptions, (Table 3.3). There were markedly more in the language and communication area (16%, twice the proportion in 1993) and fewer in the services field, such as cooking and clothing

Table 3.3 Past Course Classified by ACE Common Course Area

Common Course area	n	1994 %	1993 %
Gardening or conservation	40	1.2	3.5
Woodwork, furniture, building	135	4.0	6.1
Communications, writing	116	3.4	6.4
Other humanities	105	3.1	1.0
Crafts – pottery, leadlight, folk art	432	12.6	12.0
Visual and performing arts e.g. painting, music	424	12.4	12.6
Languages – European, Asian, sign	559	16.4	8.3
Computing – word processing, spreadsheets	272	8.0	8.2
Business – management, office skills	269	7.9	7.5
Health – first aid, yoga, massage, aerobics	396	11.6	12.5
Cooking and hospitality courses	164	4.8	11.0
Clothing, hatmaking, home furnishing	135	4.0	6.6
Engineering	76	2.2	na
Basic education, literacy	36	1.1	2.2
Other fields (life sciences, law, science)	35	1.0	1.0
Not classifiable	67	2.0	1.5
Not stated	156	4.6	na
Total	3417	100.0	100.0

	Salient*	Primary	%
	n	n	
Upgrading skills for my current job or business	642	359	10.5
Changing my current job or business	199	94	2.8
Finding a job or starting a business	263	140	4.1
Introducing me to the subject	1584	706	20.7
Extending my knowledge of the subject	1593	927	27.1
Preparing or assisting me with other studies	327	100	2.9
Meeting new people and making friends	910	57	1.7
Developing self-confidence, personal skills	917	275	8.0
Getting involved with community activities	216	23	0.7
Gaining skills useful in the household and home	823	314	9.2
Some other way (please state)	347	223	6.5
Not stated	na	199	5.8
* Multiple responses			

Table 3.4 Expectations (expected benefits) of the past course (n=3417)

courses (5%, half the proportion in 1993). As noted above, this partly reflects an under-sampling of shorter courses and the offerings of larger providers. Importantly, the major ACE strengths of arts, business and health are comparable to the 1993 profile.

Courses and Expectations

An important aspect of outcome is the participant’s expectation about the course and to what degree those expectations were realised. Expectations are defined in terms of a range of ‘expected benefits’ of courses – ways in which the course *was expected to be helpful*. These expected benefits fall into four main groups discussed later in this chapter – work-related, subject-centred, personal-social and home and community. Participants were invited

(Question 3) to indicate one or more of a range of expected benefits – the ‘salient expectations’ – and then asked to state the most important (or ‘primary’) expectation.

Table 3.4 shows that participants are clearly subject-centred in their expectations of the course. Almost half the respondents chose ‘Introducing me to the subject’ or ‘Extending my knowledge of the subject’ as one of their expectations, and also state these benefits as their primary expectation. While personal-social benefits are a consideration for at least a third, only 8.0% say ‘Developing self-confidence, personal skills’ is a primary expected benefit.

A significant number (total 17%) had a primary expectation of a direct employment-related benefit from the course such as ‘Upgrading skills for my current job or business’ (10.5%) and ‘Upgrading’ was by far the most significant expectation of this type.

Few saw ‘Changing my current job or business’ (199 or 2.8%) or ‘Finding a job or starting a business’ (263 or 4.1%) as a primary expectation. These findings are highly consistent with those of the 1993 ACE Survey where some 18% nominated the course as assisting their current or future job, business or occupation, whereas over half (57%) nominated ‘Becoming a better informed or skilled person’ as the main way the course would help them (McIntyre et al, 1993, 65ff).

ACE participants appear satisfied that the course fulfilled their expectations and ‘actually helped them’. The great majority report that the course had ‘helped them a lot’ (77%) or ‘a little’ (18%).

The ‘subject-centred’ expectation of many participants suggests that the outcomes of courses will be closely reflect the nature of the course they took. The Vocational Scope of ACE survey reported that the primary motive for enrolling seems to interact with the course area undertaken; for example, where half the participants in business courses report a vocational motive as their primary motive, 50% of participants in arts courses report a self development motive, and 67% in services courses report a community work motive. This is discussed in a later section, ‘Outcomes and Course Area’.

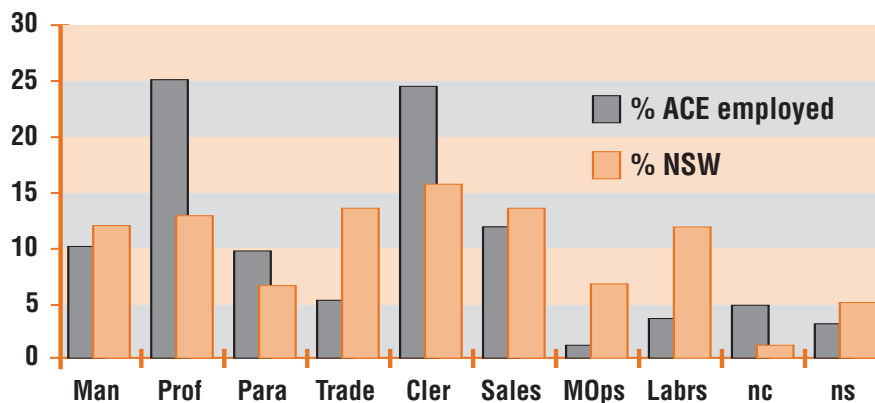
The Occupational Profile of ACE Participants

One of the most important tasks of the entire project was to provide for the first time, detailed information about the occupations and industry of employment of ACE participants. The occupational profile of participants is a crucial element in placing ACE in the overall picture of occupational skill formation.

The survey identified the occupation, industry and labour force characteristics of ACE participants (Questions 12 to 16). It confirms that a notable feature of the ACE population is their high workforce participation (76%) compared to the NSW population. Employed participants are in full-time work (45%), part time work (14%), self-employed (10%) or some combination of these (3%). It is important to know what occupations and industries this labour force represents, and how its affects the outcomes of courses undertaken.

The occupational profile of ACE participants can be summed up as a skilled workforce in which the professional, para-professional and clerical occupations dominate, while the

Figure 3.1 ACE Occupational Profile: Employed Participants by Major Group³



Occupational Minor Group	NSW %	ACE 1994 %	ACE 1993 %
Specialist managers	3.8	3.0	4.1
Managing supervisors sales/service	2.4	3.6	2.4
School teachers	3.0	9.7	6.5
Business professionals	3.2	5.4	4.7
Registered nurses	1.9	4.8	3.8
Miscellaneous para-professionals	2.2	2.9	2.6
Stenographers and typists	3.7	9.0	6.8
Numerical clerks	3.8	5.3	2.8
Receptionists, telephonists and messengers	2.2	2.8	2.1
Miscellaneous clerks	1.0	8.3	5.9
Sales assistants	5.0	4.8	4.2
Personal service workers	1.7	4.6	3.6
Total	33.9	64.2	49.6

Table 3.5 Twelve most common occupations of employed ACE participants

managerial, para-professional and sales occupations are comparable to NSW and tradespersons, machine operators and labourers are under-represented.² Figure 3.1 shows the occupational profile of employed participants compared to the NSW workforce by major occupational group.

The occupational profile has several notable features:

- Over thirty percent of the sample were professionals (in round figures, 21%) or managers and administrators (9%)
- Another thirty percent were either clerical workers (20%) or salespersons and personal service workers (10%).
- Twelve (12) minor occupational groups account for over 60% of employed respondents, among them schoolteachers, stenographers and typists, general clerks, business professionals, sales assistants, personal

service workers and registered nurses (Table 3.5).

- Professionals and clerks together account for half (50%) of the occupations of those employed participants, though these occupations comprise just over a quarter of the NSW labour force.
- Three dominant occupation groups in the NSW workforce – tradespersons, machine operators and labourers – are markedly under-represented in the sample.

The twelve largest occupational minor groups in the sample are shown in Table 3.5. These groups were also the most common in the earlier 1993 survey of ACE participants. All of these occupations appear in larger proportions in the ACE population compared to the 1991 NSW workforce.

These occupations are distributed according to type of employment. Half the self-employed are in either management (25%) or professional

(24%) occupations, while 60% of the full-time jobs are in professional or clerical occupations. Half of those reporting part-time employment work in clerical (30%) and sales (21%) occupations.

Given the sampling limitations described earlier, it is important to estimate the extent to which the restriction to ‘recurring students’ in the survey distorts this occupational profile by missing the ‘one-off participants who may be enrolling for employment-related reasons. Some occupational data collected in the 1993 Survey of ACE Learners was analysed. This survey, using a different sampling method at a different time of year, gives a profile that is very consistent with the 1994 data with some exceptions – there are fewer professionals (19% compared to 28% employed participants in 1994) and fewer para-professionals (9% compared to 10.7% in 1994), more tradespeople (6% to 4.3%), markedly fewer clerical workers (19% compared to 27%) and fewer participants as a whole in the workforce (25% of sample compared to 17.5%).

Appendix 3 provides full details of the minor occupational data for both the current survey and the 1993 Survey of ACE Learners.

Occupation and Qualifications

From the skills perspective, it is important to ask how different levels of qualifications of ACE participants are distributed in these occupation groups. In general, occupation groups are partly defined by level of qualification held. The survey shows that the sample of participants extends over a wide range of levels of qualifications.

ACE participants fall into three groups. A quarter (26.7%) hold professional level qualifications, and not surprisingly these are increasingly concentrated in the professional occupations which, as noted above, includes numbers of schoolteachers and business professionals.

Of greatest interest in this report are the middle level skills in the workforce – the advanced certificate and the associate diploma, held by over a third of the sample (1239 or 36.3%). Table 3.7 shows each level of qualification together with the proportions of each qualification held by particular occupational groups. In the area of middle levels skills, a quarter of the sample (28.4%) hold an ‘Other

Table 3.7 Qualifications Held by Occupation Major Group (n=2859)

Qualification Level	Prop (%) of qualification held by occupation		
Year 10	543	15.9	Clerks (28.6), NS* (30.0), Sales (11.8)
Trade certificate	165	4.8	Tradespeople (31.5 of this qualification)
Technician certificate	69	2.0	Tradespeople (20.3), Professionals (18.8)
Other certificate	972	28.4	Clerks (31.1), NS (21.3)
Associate diploma	198	5.8	Professionals (23.2), Paraprofessionals (18.7)
Undergrad diploma	113	3.3	Professionals (43.4)
Bachelor degree	497	14.5	Professionals (55.0)
Postgrad diploma	204	6.0	Professionals (60.8)
Masters/doctorate	98	2.9	Professionals (60.2)
Total	2859		* Those not stating an occupation

ACE Participants								
	Mang	Prof	Para	Trade	Clerks	Sales	MOPs	Labrs
Men (n=760)*	12.6	25.1	8.4	12.2	7.1	5.8	2.4	5.3
Women (n=2265)*	7.3	19.7	8.1	1.9	24.3	11.0	0.8	2.5
NSW Employed (1991)								
Men	15.2	12.4	6.2	21.0	6.1	8.9	10.2	13.5
Women	8.1	13.5	7.1	3.3	29.0	20.0	2.4	10.5
* Not stated approximately 20%								

Table 3.8 Occupation Group by Gender (n=3365)

Certificate' and the largest group represented here are the clerical workers who hold one third (31%) of all such certifications. Higher level qualifications are held by professionals and paraprofessionals mainly, while quite small numbers of participants hold a trades or technician certificate. .

There is a group of participants who do not state an occupation but who hold a qualification and their qualifications are not markedly different from the general profile. Over eighty per cent of this group state they have 10 years of schooling or a post-school qualification, and those with Year 10 amount to 20% (compared to 16% in the sample). Finally, there is a related group of participants who state neither an occupation nor qualification – some 7% of the sample.

These data reinforce the picture of qualified participants working in a range of occupations and attending ACE courses because they are oriented to learning in the post-school years.

Occupation and Gender

The outstanding feature of the ACE population is the predominance of women in ACE courses. Thus an important question is how far the occupational profile reflects the known gender

segregation of the workforce as a whole. Table 3.8 shows that half the men are concentrated in managerial, professional and trades occupations (total 49.8%). Women dominate the clerical and sales groups with 35%, compared to only 13% of men in these groups. However, nearly a quarter of the women are in either managerial (7.3%) or professional (19.7%) occupations and there are equal proportions of men and women in the para-professional group.

When compared to the distribution of males and females in the NSW workforce, there are relatively more female ACE participants in the professional occupations, and in the two groups where women are massively concentrated – clerks and salespersons – there are markedly fewer in NSW from the sales group, while female clerks are comparable to NSW. In contrast, there is twice the proportion of professional males in the ACE sample than in the workforce, more para-professionals, fewer managers and notably fewer trades. Operatives and labourers of either sex are less numerous.

Taking the preponderance of women into account, ACE caters for groups of women across the workforce, with a significant number holding higher and middle level qualifications.

Another question is whether there are differences between men and women in the sample that are linked to employment and qualifica-

tions. It is frequently asserted that ACE’s main role is in ‘second chance’ education (cf ESFC, 1994, 62) particularly for women. Table 3.9 shows the distribution of three levels of qualification (year 10 only, certificate and diploma or degree) between those in the workforce and those not in the workforce, for each sex. More men are employed and more of them have some form of post-school qualification compared to the women in the sample. It is again notable that the ‘middle’ or certificate level qualifications abound in the sample and are held by half the men and half the women. However, relatively more women hold no post-school qualification compared to the men (30% and 18%) and women are less likely to hold a degree or diploma.

Of those in the workforce, women are relatively less qualified than employed men and more employed women have no post-school qualification, compared to men. The proportion of women who might be thought of as most disadvantaged compared to the rest of the sample in holding no qualification and not being in the workforce (because they are retired, parenting or a student) amounts to one tenth (9.6%) of the women. It is assumed this group is most likely to want ‘second chance’ education, and that ACE has a role in providing further education for these women though they

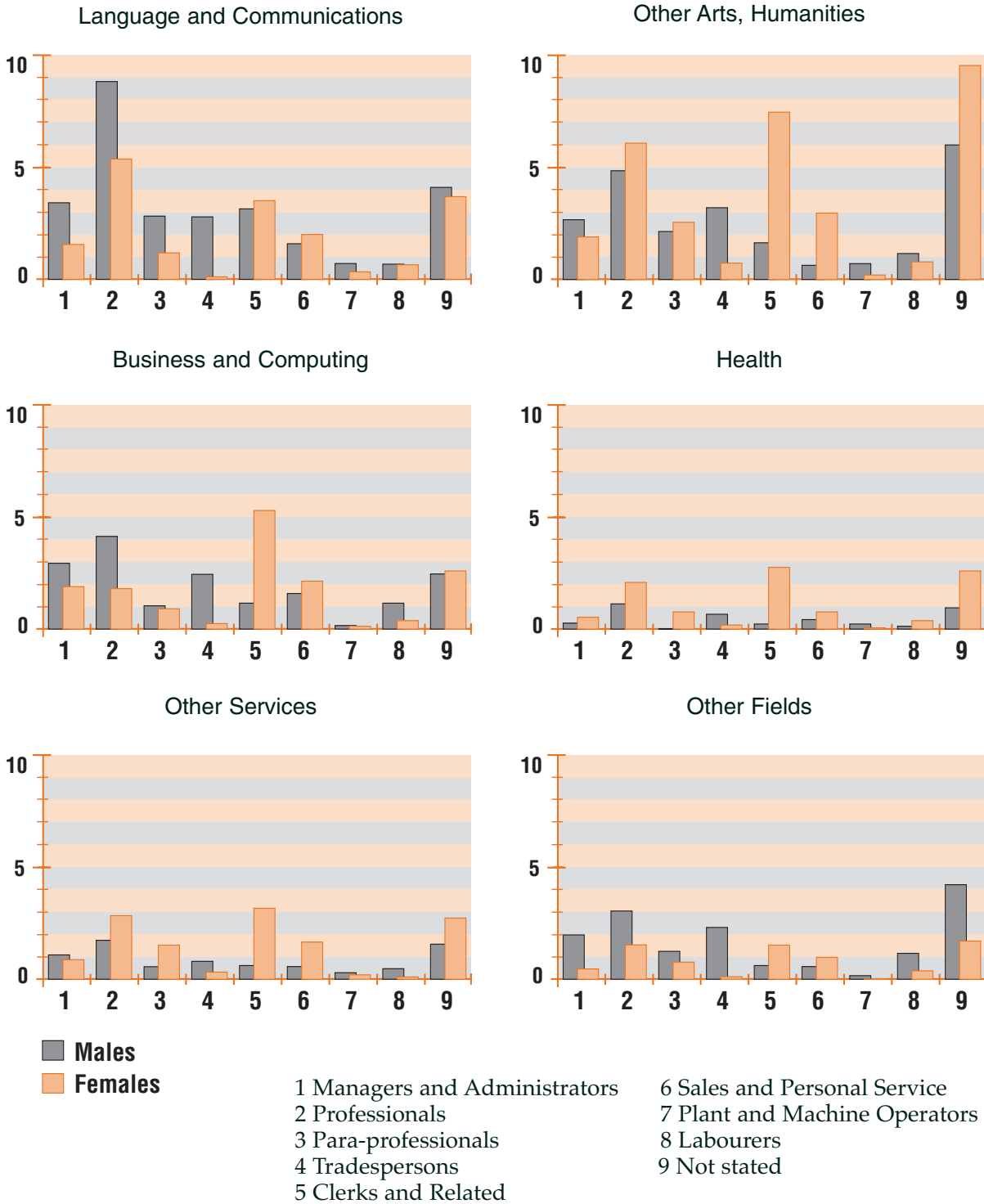
do not form a large proportion of the ACE population.

Having regard to the quarter of women in the ACE population who are likely not to participate in the paid workforce, the survey attempted to assess through a further question on ‘working at home’ how far participants were engaged in home-based work in areas such as the arts, teaching or health. Of those stating their employment situation as being ‘at home’, the vast majority (525 or over 80%) were women. Of those 635 participants, 185 said they were working at home, nearly a third of whom were artists and related professionals and half either miscellaneous tradespeople or miscellaneous workers.

Finally, there is a trend for occupation and gender to be associated with type of course taken. A later section will explain how course area is a significant variable explaining outcomes, and shows that the type of course chosen (defined in terms of field of study) is influenced by participants’ age and employment, and their sex and education. It is possible that occupation is associated with this trend. When the proportions of each gender in the sample are distributed by course field of study, there are some noticeable differences between men and women in their participation.

Table 3.9 Gender, Workforce Status and Qualifications of Participants (n=3365)

		Qualification			
		Yr 10	Cert	Dip/degree	Total
Males n=760	Employed	13.3	42.1	24.9	80.3
	Not Employed	3.9	7.5	5.5	17.0
	Not stated	0.9	1.3	0.5	2.8
		18.2	50.9	30.9	100.0
Females n=2605	Employed	19.7	37.1	18.4	75.2
	Not Employed	9.6	10.5	3.1	23.3
	Not stated	0.5	0.8	0.1	1.5
		29.9	48.5	21.7	100.0



Note: This table shows the proportions (%) of male participants and female participants taking a course in one of six fields of study, by occupation major group. Thus the percentages for each sex total 100% across the six fields (Males, n=757, Females, n=2605)

Figure 3.2 Proportions of Males and Females, by Course Field and Occupation

Figure 3.2 reflects the relative size of the occupations and the relative size of course fields. The graphs show that male professionals were most commonly enrolled in Language and Communication courses; female professionals in Language and in Other Arts and Humanities; female clerks in Other Arts, in Business and Computing and several other course fields. Males generally tend to be enrolled in the first three fields named, whereas Health (a smaller field) and Other Services (which includes cooking and clothing courses) is dominated by females. Female professionals were relatively absent from Business and Computing, whereas male managers and male professionals were proportionally well-represented. These trends, while not conclusive, point to some gender and occupational differences in participation in ACE courses. However, as a later section will discuss, occupation is does not differentiate type of outcome reported by participants.

those employed in community services, nearly half (44%) are in public sector and a quarter in the ‘community sector’. Ninety per cent of those employed in manufacturing, wholesale and retail and public administration are employed in the private sector (Figure 3.3).

Over 60% of those working are employed in private companies, twice those employed in public sector (30%), with 9% employed in the community sector. Almost all (93%) of the managers, 80% of the tradespeople, 70% of the sales and 65% of the clerks were employed in the private sector, whereas 40% of the professionals and 41% of the para-professionals were in government employment.

Industry and Sector of Employment.

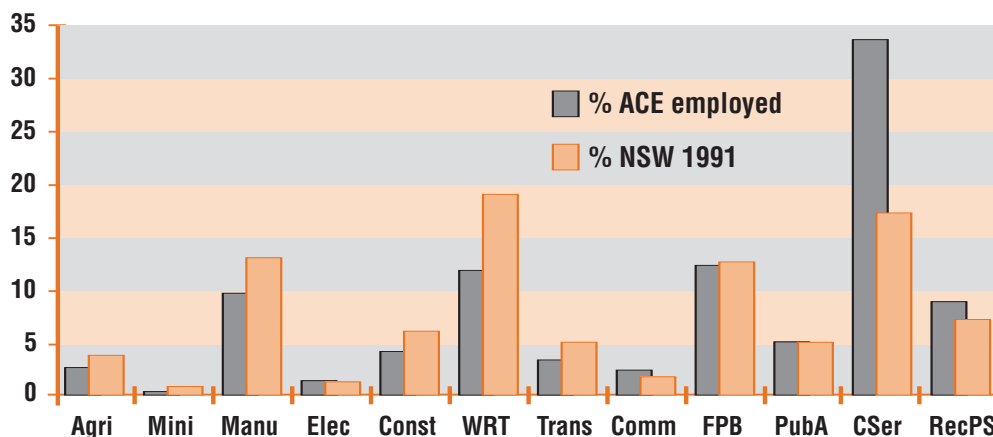
The ACE population appears to be concentrated in four main industry groups – more than a third (38%) of the employed participants work in community services, with manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade and public administration employing another third. Of

Outcomes and Skills

The survey explored the skills perspective on outcomes in several ways. It asked participants to state (Question 7) whether their ‘skills had improved’ in each of the seven Mayer key competencies (plus the eighth ‘cultural competency’) and whether it had helped them ‘perform their work better’ in terms of certain areas of work suggested by the ESFC Second Report (Question 17).

Participants usually reported skill improvements in one to two areas and there are clear differences across the eight key competencies, (Table 3.10 – note that the eighth or ‘cultural competency’ was included in this study).

Figure 3.3 Industry of Employment of Employed ACE Participants (n=2465)



Communicative, technological and cultural competence were the most commonly reported areas of improvement. One quarter of the respondents did not see these skill areas as relevant categories.

This finding is significant in several ways. In a sense, the survey question is a test of the meaningfulness of the Mayer categories to adult learners. A fifth (737 or 21.6%) of participants responded that their skills improved ‘in

some other area’ and a mere 4% reported no improvement. The vast majority of these ACE participants described their skill improvement in Mayer terms. This is consistent with participants who perceive their course outcomes in terms of generic skills, a view supported by responses to other questions.

The second way of viewing skill formation was in terms of skill improvement at work. Participants were asked whether the past

Mayer Key Competency	n	%
Better at finding and sorting information	419	12.3
Better at communicating in language, writing, art, other	1052	30.8
Better at planning and organising at home or work	367	10.7
Better at working with or relating to others	536	15.7
Better at using maths, measuring, estimating, calculating	144	4.2
Better at making decisions, solving problems	357	10.4
Better at using technology – tools, computers, equipment	649	19.0
Better at understanding other cultures	629	18.4
Some other area of skill (please describe)	737	21.6
The course did not improve my skills	736	4.0

Table 3.10 Reported Skill Improvement in the Key Competencies

Table 3.11 Improved Performance in Four Areas of Work

Area of Work	n	%
gain relevant job skills or knowledge	769	22.5
work better with other people	454	13.3
achieve better standards of quality or service	498	14.6
improve thinking skills, problem-solving.	644	18.8
some other way	311	9.1
course was not helpful in these ways	882	25.2
Not applicable – participant not in the workforce	527	15.4
Total	4085	118.9

	n	%
Find paid work or start a business	92	2.7
Become more secure in present job	311	9.1
Build up my job or expand my business	179	5.2
Get promotion in the job	50	1.5
Move to a better job elsewhere	123	3.6
Some other way (please state)	292	8.5
The course was not helpful in these ways	1485	43.5
Not applicable – have not worked since the course	688	20.1

Table 3.12 Job Prospects and Career Outcomes

courses had helped them perform their work better in terms of the broad areas of work suggested by the ESFC Second Report (Table 3.11). About a quarter (23%) of respondents saw improvement in work-relevant job skills or knowledge, with significant numbers in other areas of work.

Again, this response is consistent with a sample who can see the vocational relevance of their course in terms of generic skills. Allowing for the fact that 15% are not in the workforce and that a quarter say the course was not helpful in these ways, 60% see improved performance in these categories of ‘areas of

work’. Table 3.11 supports the view suggested by our earlier survey that a quarter of ACE participants are looking for **specific** job-skills and knowledge as a direct outcome of courses.

Further evidence that the sample perceive outcomes in generic terms is suggested by the responses to the questions on job and career prospects (Question 18) and the influence of changes in the workplace (Question 19). Table 3.12 suggests that most of the sample felt the course was not relevant to their job prospects, with 43% saying the course was not helpful in the ways suggested, such as becoming more secure in the job, gaining promotion, moving to

Table 3.13 Changes at Work Influencing Enrolment

	n	%
New machines being introduced	120	3.5
Organisation being restructured	123	3.6
Business becoming more competitive	165	4.8
Jobs needing new types of skills	312	9.1
More worker involvement in decision-making	72	2.1
None of the above	1802	52.7
Not applicable – have not worked since the course	711	20.8

Course Feature:	n*	%
The level was right for me	1916	56.1
The work was practical	1997	58.4
The course was the right number of weeks	921	27.0
Getting access to tools, equipment.	498	14.6
The teaching qualities of the tutor	2152	63.0
Working with the other students	1069	31.3
None of the above	94	2.8
*Multiple responses		

Table 3.14 Course features which assisted learning (n=3417)

another job or expanding business (a total of 663 respondents, or 19.4%). This seems surprising, but may reflect the occupational profile of the workforce.

Similarly, half the sample responded that workplace changes of the kind suggested had not influenced their participation in the course (Table 3.13). This is again surprising but, as will be apparent in responses to the lifelong learning outcomes question (see below) are consistent with both the nature of the workforce and the orientation of these learners

to generic skills. A quarter (792 respondents or 23.1%) however, did report workplace changes had influenced them to enrol and presumably affected their expectations and outcomes.

Assessing participants' perceptions of outcomes is only half the story, since it is also necessary to know something of the course features that give rise to the outcomes they are reporting. Question 8 (Table 3.14) collected such information.

Table 3.15 Concerns in choosing the course (n=3417)

Concern:	n*	%
Whether the course gave me a certificate	434	12.7
Whether my family/partner would mind	173	5.1
Whether I had to do tests or exams	437	12.8
Whether time and place was convenient	1589	46.5
Whether I could afford the fees	853	25.0
Whether the course was the right level	1318	38.6
Some other concern (please state)	113	3.3
None of the above concerns	803	23.5
* Multiple responses		

Participants appear to give most weight to teaching qualities of the tutor (63% of respondents), to the course being at the right level (56%) and practical (58%). This implies a positive experience – the tutor, the level and the experience are often right for these participants. On average, the respondents reported two to three features as assisting their learning. There are few participants that reject these features as assisting their learning (3%) compared to other questions in the survey.

Whether the course would be at the right level (Question 9, Table 3.15) was *also* the most common concern in choosing the course (39% of respondents) after the ‘convenience’ of the time and place of the course. This reinforces the view that the ‘match’ of course to their needs and abilities is important to these ACE participants. Cost was a concern to a quarter of participants.

These findings have implications for the promotion of ACE courses within the VET system. They confirm the views of Principals

and Coordinators in the sector that the strengths of ACE in the ‘training market’ are the quality and relevance of its courses, its convenience and accessibility and its low cost.

Lifelong learning and vocational outcomes

The vocational emphasis in ACE has been liberally interpreted and understood in terms of a philosophy of lifelong learning. The broadening emphasis on lifelong learning in the workforce and on the development of generic skills makes the question of lifelong learning outcomes a significant one. The survey attempted to assess the ‘life-relevance’ of courses to assess this important dimension of vocational learning. The response of participants strongly confirms the picture of ‘subject-centredness’ of ACE participants and their

Table 3.16 Lifelong learning outcomes (n=3073)

	Salient n*	Primary n	%
Getting ready to enter the workforce	150	88	2.6
Preparing to return to the workforce	128	83	2.4
Leaving the workforce, preparing for retirement	130	36	1.1
Making a home, managing a household	217	40	1.2
Adjusting to separation, loss of partner or relative	112	18	0.5
Becoming a better partner, parent or carer	237	57	1.7
Exploring a new interest, broadening my horizons	2355	1494	43.7
Learning for fun and enjoyment	2006	669	19.6
Becoming more independent, self-confident	814	200	5.9
Thinking about the world and my role in it	385	50	1.5
Better able to participate, take committed action	473	108	3.2
Some other way	231	189	5.5
Course was not relevant in this way	110	41	1.2
* Multiple responses			

how to	992	comput-	156	do	98
basic	392	make	143	cook	89
skill	242	write	143	relax	88
about	196	paint	135	know	80
use	190	type	115	sew	73
speak	184	techni-	114	read	71
more	166	art	106	better	65

Table 3.17 Most frequent keywords occurring in learner statements

enjoyment of learning. It confirms again that the course itself is the major factor in the participant's views of their learning. Table 3.16 shows that 'Exploring a new interest, broadening my horizons' was nominated by more participants than any other as the primary way in which the course was relevant to their lives, with 'Learning for fun and enjoyment' a secondary consideration.

By any standard this order of response is surprising and suggests that the ethos of their liberal adult education remains strong for the survey participants.

Levels of Skill

A final question concerns the level at which ACE participants are achieving improvements of skill. Clearly participants are concerned about the 'level of the course being right', practical and relevant to their needs (Tables 3.14 and 3.15). Further, more participants state that 'extending their knowledge' is their primary expectation of the course than expecting the course to 'introduce' them to the subject (Table 3.4). It is harder to determine at what level participants might be achieving skills, since 'level' is partly a subjective perception of the learner, partly a matter of the nominal status of the course (for example, in being advertised as introductory or advanced)

and partly a matter of some form of measurement of achievement.

Participants were asked to 'describe the main skill or knowledge [they] gained from the course' in a few words (Question 6, Table 3.17). Though limited data, these 'learner statements' give some clues as to how participants perceived their studies. A search of 3190 statements by fifty keywords was made. Relatively few statements referred to level, though the word 'basic' was the most common descriptor of all, next to 'how to' and 'skill' and 'use'. This point gains in significance in view of the fact that participants are concerned that the course be at the right level. The great majority referred to procedural knowledge (expressed in terms of skills) rather than propositional knowledge or understanding, or referred to the subject itself. This confirms, if anything, the 'subject-focus' that has been discerned in the findings of the survey so far.

Outcomes, courses and participants

Among the participants nominating certain key competencies as outcomes of their past course, there were minor differences in their occupation, industry, labour force status or other characteristics.

The outstanding exception is the strong

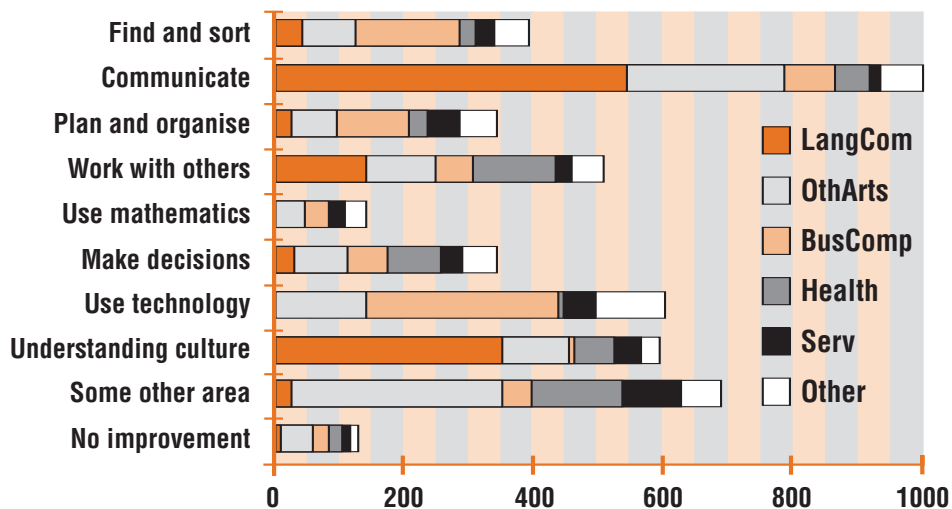
Proportions (%) by Course Major Field –							
Key Competency:	LangCom	Other Arts	BusCom	Health	Serv	Other	n
Find and sort	10.5	19.1	38.9	5.7	6.4	13.8	419
Communicate	51.9	23.3	7.1	5.6	1.0	6.8	1052
Plan and organise	8.7	18.0	30.0	6.5	16.3	15.0	367
Work with others	26.3	20.1	10.8	24.6	4.9	9.3	536
Use mathematics	0.7	30.6	29.2	1.4	12.5	24.3	144
Make decisions	9.8	22.1	16.5	24.6	8.7	16.0	357
Use technology	1.1	21.4	45.8	0.6	8.6	16.3	649
Understand culture	56.3	16.1	1.1	10.3	6.4	5.1	629
Some other area	4.2	43.6	6.8	18.6	12.8	8.7	737
No improvement	7.4	37.5	15.4	17.6	7.4	11.8	136

Table 3.18 Key Competencies as Outcome by Course Field

relationship between key competency and the field of study of the past course. The proportions of participants in different course areas varies greatly according to which key competency is nominated as an area of improvement (Table 3.18, Figure 3.4). This relationship reflects the over-riding importance of ‘course area’ as a factor affecting participation in ACE.

Thus the largest numbers of people selecting ‘Finding and sorting information’ as an area of skill improvement had completed courses in the Business major field including computing (BusCom). The pattern was even more pronounced in the case of ‘Using technology’ where nearly half of those nominating this key area were referring to a courses in the Business

Figure 3.4 Key Competencies as Outcome by Course Field



Proportions (%) by Primary Expectation						
	Work	Subject	PersSoc	HomeC	ns	n
Find and sort	34.6	47.5	6.2	6.0	5.7	419
Communicate	17.5	53.4	14.4	4.4	10.4	1052
Plan and organise	30.0	38.1	9.0	16.6	6.3	367
Work with others	18.1	42.4	21.8	7.5	10.3	536
Use maths	28.5	42.4	5.6	17.4	6.3	144
Make decisions	21.3	44.5	16.8	8.1	9.2	357
Use technology	30.2	48.4	4.9	11.7	4.8	649
Understand culture	13.8	61.5	7.8	4.8	12.1	629
Some other area	9.2	52.8	8.8	14.8	14.4	737
No improvement	12.5	56.6	6.6	8.1	16.2	136

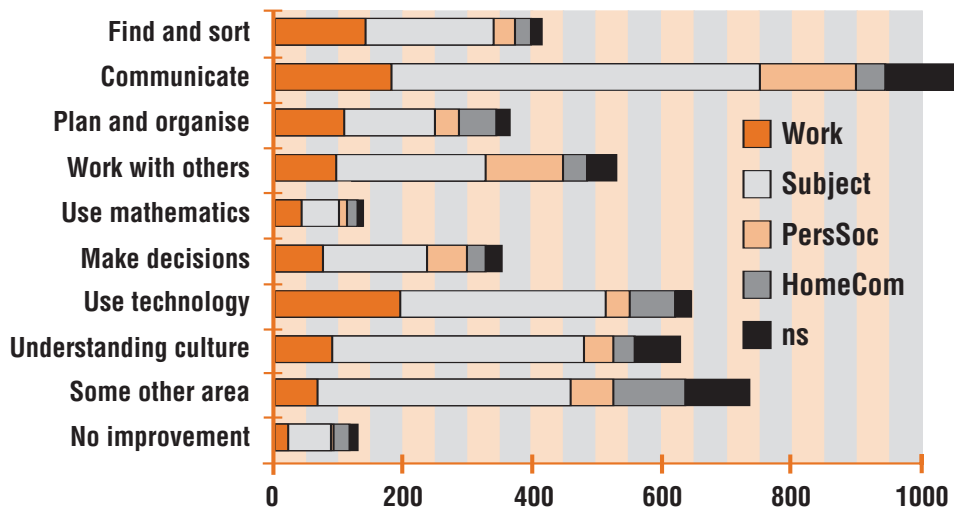
Table 3.19 Key Competency as Outcome by Primary Expectation

field. In contrast, over half (53%) of those nominating ‘Communicating’ and ‘Understanding other cultures’ were referring to a course in the Language and Communication sub-field (Lang). Those nominating ‘Some other area’ mostly took a course in the Arts area (other than language courses).

A second area of marked differences among

participants nominating each key competency as an area of improvement in skill are related to their ‘primary expectation’. Eight types of expectation were collapsed to five categories of ‘Work-related’, ‘Subject-Centred’, ‘Personal-Social’ and ‘Home and Community’ (Table 3.19, Figure 3.5). Thus a ‘Work-related’ expectation refers to participants who nominated the

Figure 3.5 Key Competency as Outcome by Primary Expectation (n= responses)



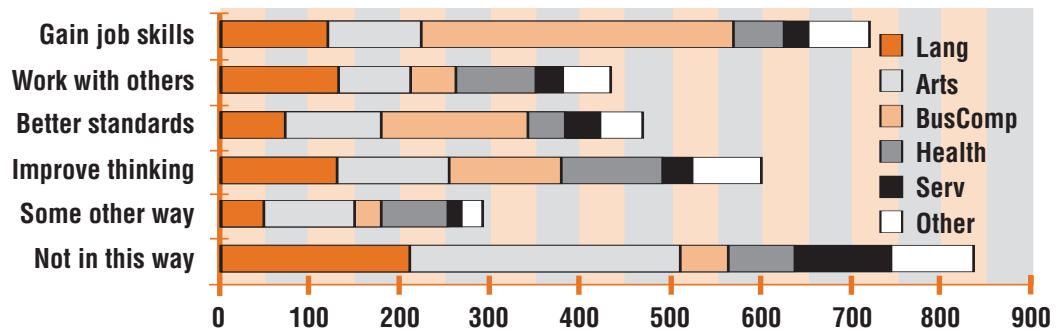


Figure 3.6 Improvement in an EFSC Area of Work and Course Area

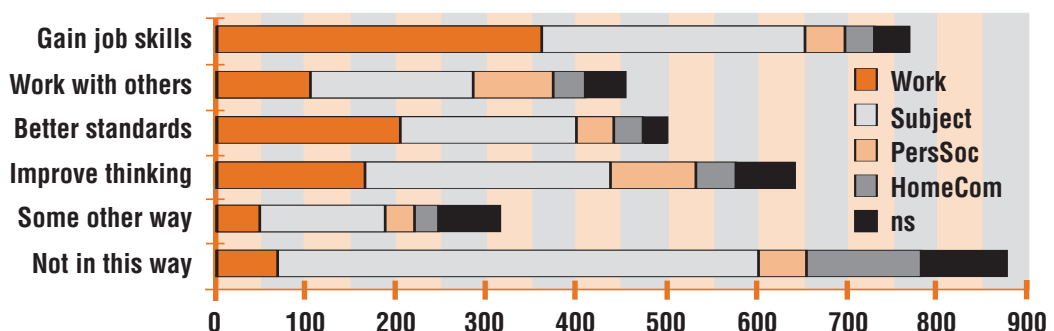
first three categories of Table 3.4 (upgrading skills, changing or finding a job) as the expectation that was most important to them. The proportions of those with such expectations are highest in the ‘Finding and sorting’, Planning and organising and ‘Using technology’ key areas. However, the highest proportions of participants with any kind of primary expectation are those with a ‘Subject’ expectation, for those stating a ‘Communicating’ or ‘Using technology’ outcome.

These data strengthen the picture of a population of participants for whom the particular course is the major influence on the outcomes they see from their course, and secondly, their expectations of the course. For these participants at least, certain generic skills are most likely to be an outcome of certain types of courses rather than strongly related to participants’ occupational or industry characteristics.

Similarly, whether or not the course is seen as contributing to improved performance at work is related to the course field of study. The Employment and Skills Formation Council’s four ‘areas of work’ were nominated in this question. More said improvement at work was in the area of ‘gaining job skills’ than any other, and the largest proportion of these respondents had done a Business and Computing course (Figure 3.6).

The primary expected benefit appears to differentiate the participants in regard to work-related outcomes. Those with a ‘Work-Related’ Expectation (e.g. that the course would assist with their current job or business) are better represented in each group nominating this outcome, more so than the largest group of participants, those with a ‘Subject’ related expectation (e.g. increase my knowledge of the subject). This group make up a large majority of those stating that the course was ‘not helpful

Figure 3.7 Improvement in an EFSC Area of Work and Primary Expectation



in these ways', that is, in improving their performance at work).

As previously stated, fewer than a quarter (23%) of participants reported that the past course helped their Career Prospects or chose their course because of Changes At Work (23%). Participants with a 'Work-related' expectation are strongly represented among those responding in this way. They appear more likely to respond positively to these questions. Those with a Subject Expectation (a majority of respondents) were found in greater numbers responding that the course was 'Not helpful in this way' to their career prospects. Similarly, those nominating 'Changes At Work' they said did not influence their enrolment.

Course of enrolment also accounts for some of the differences among participants in their responses to the Career Prospects and Changes At Work questions. While the number reporting any one of these outcomes was small (as previously stated) those who did respond were much more likely to be involved in Business and Computing courses.

Some Key Outcome Relationships

The research used an inferential statistical technique, loglinear modelling, to determine some key relationships between skill outcomes and participant variables. As reported above, Course area and Mayer Key competency appear to be closely related. Loglinear modelling allows us to examine the key issue of how participant characteristics, together with Course area, might affect the response to each of the 'areas of skill improvement' of the key competencies. This provides further insight into the nature of outcomes for different groups of learners.¹

As has already been emphasised, the past Course taken is an important factor in the data. Course choice is strongly related to Age and Employment and Gender and Education in interaction. Significantly, the Course taken affects responses to each of the key competen-

cies, either entirely alone or in complex combinations with other variables.

There are clear differences in the models explaining responses to the eight Key Competency areas. The models fall into two groups. Responses in the Competencies M2 (Communicating), M3 (Planning and Organising) and M7 (Using Technology) are explained almost completely by Course area, as illustrated in Figure 3.9.

The Mayer 'Communicating' competency is closely associated with Language or Communication courses, as previously noted (Table 3.18).

In addition:

- It is much more likely for younger people (aged under 30) to respond that skills have improved in the Communicating key competency than for middle-aged (30 - 49) or older people (aged 55 and over) to do so.
- It is seven times more likely that *any* participant who took a past course in Language or Communications will respond that their skills improved in this area, than someone taking a Business or Computing course, and ten times more likely than someone taking a Health course and fifty times more likely than someone who took a Services (cooking or clothing) course.

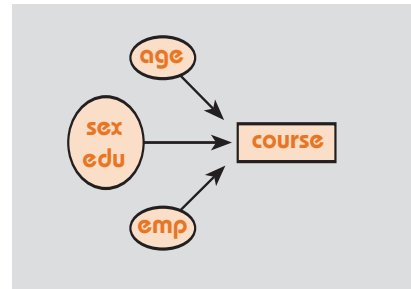
Response to the third key competency, 'Planning and organising at work or at home' (M3) is entirely explained by field of past course taken (Figure 3.9).

- It is twice as likely for any participant who took a Business or Computing course to report that skill has improved in this area than a participant who took a Health course, or a Services course or (less so) an Arts course, and four times more likely than a participant in a Language or Communication course.

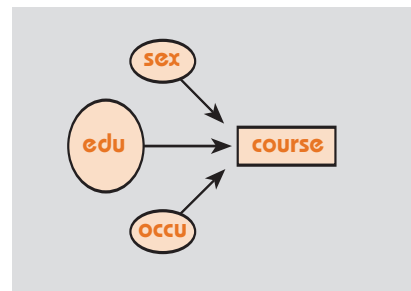
Again, the responses to the 'Using Technology' competency as an area of skill improvement is also entirely explained with a similar model also shown in Figure 3.9.

- It is forty times more likely that *any* participant taking a past Business or Computing course responded this way than someone who took a past course in Language or Communications or Health (more so) and

Age and employment affect course chosen, and so do sex and education in combination.



Sex, education and occupation each affect the course chosen. These relationships were discussed earlier under 'occupation and gender.'



Key: age = age (older than 50, medium, 30 - 49, young, under 30); sex = male, female; edu = qualifications (degree, sub-degree, not qualified); emp = labour force status (in the labour force, not in the labour force); course = course field (Language and Communication, Other Arts, Business and Computing; Health; Other Services; Other).

Figure 3.8 Factors associated with Course Choice

six times more likely than someone who took a Services course, and only *twice* as likely as someone taking an Arts course.

In other words, participants in Business and Computing and Arts courses tend to have this response in common – and this response is not qualified by any other factor (their sex, qualification and so on). This may be explained by the emphasis on technical matters in arts and crafts courses across the board in ACE and underlines the role it is playing in this area. The eighth or 'cultural' competency, however, has a model that is somewhere between that for 'Communicating' and the other 'complex' competencies described below. The pattern of relationships is much more complex and diffuse for the other Mayer key competencies, illustrated in Figure 3.10.

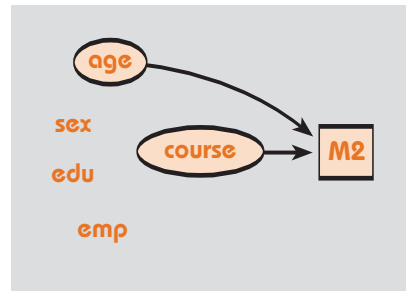
The findings for these three competencies throw into sharp relief the fact that participants are responding in different ways to the Mayer

competencies when these are presented as 'areas' in which their skills might have improved. It is obvious that for these ACE participants at least, that the Communicating, Planning and Organising and Using Technology are chosen not only by large numbers of people but in consistent ways, whereas the other competencies are more complex in their relationship to other variables. In other words, these Key competencies are less straightforwardly a matter of the kind of course offered than the participants and their characteristics – their age, sex, qualifications or labour force status.

Participants appear to be gaining quite varied outcomes from different types of courses. This is consistent with the findings of the *Vocational Scope of ACE* data where similar course-related patterns were found. The difference here is that these models express more precisely what participants were gaining from those courses.

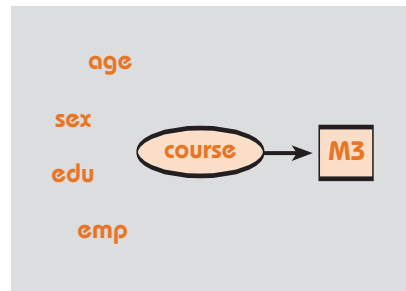
Communicating in Language, Writing, Art (M2).

Response to Communication (31% of respondents) is explained almost completely by Course taken, with Age a secondary factor.



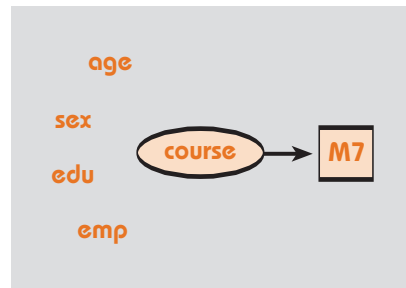
Planning and Organising (M3).

Like M2, the response to Planning and Organising (11% of respondents) is explained entirely by Course taken.



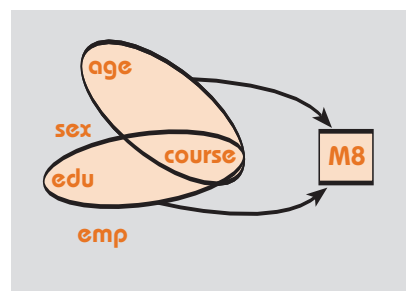
Using Technology (M7)

The response to the 'Using Technology' as an area of skill improvement (19% of respondents) is explained almost completely by Course taken.



Understanding Other Cultures (M8)

The response to Understanding Other Cultures (18% of respondents) shows that Course taken in combination with Age and Qualifications, best explains the response.

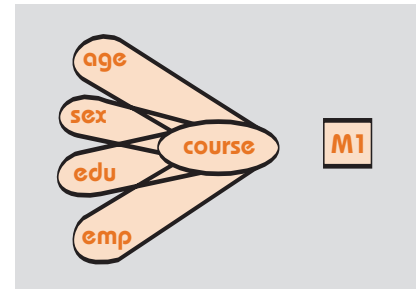


Key: age = age (older than 50, 30 - 49, under 30); sex = male, female; edu = qualifications (degree, sub-degree, not qualified); emp = labour force status (in the labour force, not in the labour force); course = course field (Language and Communication, Other Arts, Business and Computing; Health; Other Services; Other).

Figure 3.9 Key Competencies as Outcomes – Simple Loglinear Models

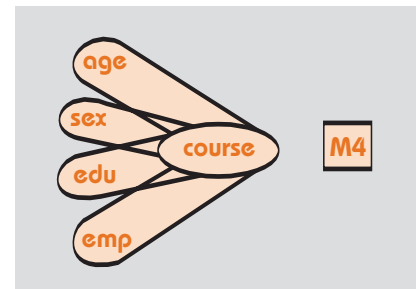
Finding and Sorting Information (M1).

Response to the first Mayer competency is related to several variables in a complex way. Age, Sex, Employment Status and Education in interaction with Course affect the response.



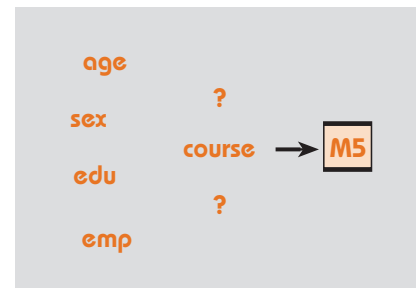
Working With Others(M4)

Response to this competency is like M1, associated in a very complex way by several participant variables in interaction with Course.



Using Maths, Measuring, Estimating (M5).

The response to this competency was too small to be assessed since only 4% chose this as an area of improvement.



Making Decisions, Solving Problems (M6).

Again, several variables in combination and interaction with Course are needed to explain the response (10% of respondents).

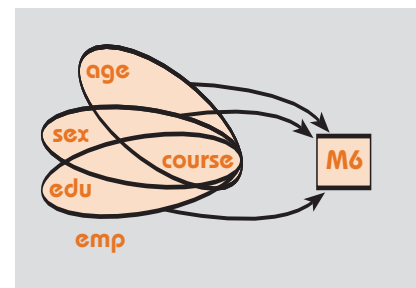


Figure 3.10. Key Competencies as Outcomes – Complex Loglinear Models

Summary

In summary, the survey provides clear evidence that ACE participants see the outcomes of their courses in generic rather than job-specific terms. While they are clear that courses are relevant to improving skills in the areas of the Mayer key competencies, and improving their performance in nominated areas of work, they are just as clear that job security and workplace changes are not significant factors influencing their learning. They overwhelmingly perceive that learning is relevant to their lives in terms of the expanding of their knowledge and interest rather than in other ways, including adjustment to leaving or entering the workforce. When the structure of their response to the key competencies as outcomes is analysed, the best mathematical model for three dominant competencies is one which highlights the nature of the course taken. This is a population of learners who have an orientation to lifelong learning expressed as a focus on subject mastery.

Notes

- ¹ Loglinear or logistic modelling is the appropriate inferential statistical technique to use with categorical data obtained from surveys. This enables data analysis to go beyond the purely descriptive. Loglinear models are used to examine the connections between several qualitative variables. Such models seek to explain the number of observations at each combination of the variables and to describe the pattern of association between them. Those variables which have significant effects, individually or in combination, are identified, and the magnitude of these effects are estimated.

This analysis together with the descriptive statistics for the Learner and Employers were carried out by Dr Peter Petocz, School of Mathematical Sciences at UTS, statistical consultant to the project.

ACE, Employers and Industry

THIS CHAPTER REPORTS on the vocational outcomes of ACE from the perspective of employers and industry. The task for the research was twofold – first, to establish the extent to which ACE has been successful in providing training customised to employer needs, and in providing labour market programs funded by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET). Second, the research was required to investigate how employers, particularly small business, might be using ACE courses to meet their training needs.

Adult education has historically not focused on industry needs nor worked closely with employers to meet their training needs. Providers are not geared to collect information about employers using their courses, and indeed the main challenge for the research was to uncover the ‘invisible’ use of ACE courses especially by local businesses.¹

The objectives of the employer study were to –

- establish the training roles ACE is performing with special reference to ACE’s

involvement in customised industry training and DEET-funded contract training;

- profile ACE employers using college records, referring to their industry group, size and location of business and other characteristics;
- establish how employers are using ACE courses to meet their needs; and
- document employer perceptions of ACE regarding such issues as choice of ACE as a provider, outcome areas, course quality and appropriateness, and employer support for training.

The research explored the industry perspective in a number of ways –

- canvassing issues through a focus group with ACE providers on how they are meeting the needs of industry, especially exploring how employers are using ACE for customised training;
- analysing data on programs provided by DEET on contract training and collecting

case studies of customised training from the large providers;

- using college and centre records to establish a database of employers and identify relationships between employer characteristics and the course areas and outcomes;
- interviewing a sample of employers selected from the database to document employer perspectives on training ; and
- conducting a reply-paid survey (n=1200) of employers identified from college and centre records.

Contract and Customised Training In ACE

The first phase of the research was a consultation process with providers. A focus group of ACE Principals and Co-ordinators explored the issues arising from their provision of ‘special courses’ outside the general or advertised program. They suggested the best way to approach providers² and a number of useful avenues for collecting data about employers. They also felt that the terms ‘customised’ and ‘contract’ are not in common use with providers and that it would be unprofitable to survey Evening Colleges, as planned. Instead, those Principals unable to attend the original consultation should be interviewed and a number of case studies would be developed to document the best practice in customised training. In general, the view strongly expressed was that employers make the greatest use of ACE through the general program of providers.

The focus group also made the following observations –

- Only those colleges who have both staff and premises dedicated to this form of provision are likely to seek out customised training. Few colleges can afford the time and personnel commitment necessary for this kind of entrepreneurial development.
- Nonetheless Principals do respond keenly to requests to provide customised training

which may follow from the positive experiences of employees or employers as students in the general program. In some cases employers will simply pay the costs of their employees’ attendance at courses in the general program because this is cheaper than commissioning a course.

- Evening Colleges have plenty to offer as providers of vocational training especially for small scale, local businesses whose employees may need to develop specific competencies from time to time rather than enrol in a longer term course. They are able to respond quickly, to adapt courses to the needs of the employers, to provide appropriate adult teaching and to develop continuing programs or advise on articulation with other courses if required.
- Attendance at evening courses can lead to self-employment and the development of ‘cottage industries’ particularly in the areas of arts and crafts.
- Colleges have no means of monitoring the use students are making of the general program for vocational purposes. They do not necessarily keep records of the number of fees paid by employers and they do not know what percentage of students pay their own fee and then receive reimbursement from their employer.
- Tendering for contract training is time consuming but more manageable than the uncertainty of seeking out customised training opportunities. Opportunities for contract training are not evenly distributed with fewer opportunities in geographic areas of relatively high employment.
- There were many reports of positive vocational outcomes from courses in the general program ranging from increased skill and self confidence, to better information about different areas of employment and possibilities for self-employment.

Further information from the focus group and provider follow-up interviews is reported in the following sections.

Contract training

The survey of providers in *The Vocational Scope of ACE* found that 29 of those responding had applied for funding for labour market programs such as Jobtrain, JobClub funded by DEET or DIRETFE, and that generally the large colleges and WEAs were successful in tendering, with this funding making up from 5% to 30% of their turnover. Some ran these activities as separate programs within their organisation. It found that some colleges had

developed a close working relationship with the CES who funded multiple services including performing assessments of ESL students.

DEET was requested to provide data on the involvement of NSW ACE providers in DEET-funded courses from 1992 to 1994. DEET funds ACE courses in two ways – through individual placements of students in established courses and through project funding of contracted courses, or through contract training. The DEET data excluded Landcare and other programs for which some colleges such as

Table 4.1 DEET funding of placements and courses in ACE, 1992 - 1994

	1992	1993	1994	Total
Colleges (n=19)				
Individual Placements	116	179	155	450
Cost (\$)			21,203	45,589
78,239	145,031			
Contracted Courses	19	22	18	59
Placements	229	315	224	768
Cost (\$)	354,555	506,980	397,329	1,258,864
CAECs (n=13)				
Individual Placements	7	22	47	76
Cost (\$)	442	5,186	23,299	28,927
Contracted Courses	1	0	0	1
Placements	12	0	0	12
Cost (\$)	14,577	0	0	14,577
WEAs (n=4)				
Individual Placements	137	191	103	421
Cost (\$)	28,519	27,847	19,220	75,586
Contracted Courses	6	6	10	22
Placements	63	58	116	237
Cost (\$)	106,076	110,540	167,940	384,466
Total Placements	564	765	645	1974
Total Cost (\$)	529,178	696,052	683,846	1,905,250

Provider	Individual Placements		Contract Training	
	\$	%	\$	%
St George-Sutherland REC	39,355	15.8	56,637	3.4
AEC for Deaf and HI	20,165	8.1	-	-
Macquarie CC	14,935	6.0	539,846	32.6
Strathfield Regional CC	1,308	0.5	225,832	13.6
Parramatta REC	974	0.4	114,734	6.9
Manly-Warringah CC	13,307	5.3	180,663	10.9
WEA Hunter	10,026	4.0	382,896	23.1
Central Coast (WEA)	37,390	15.0	-	-

Table 4.2 Providers with large shares (%) of DEET funding, 1992-1994

Strathfield, Manly-Warringah and Central West Community Colleges have received large amounts of funding in 1994, so the extent of ACE contract training is under-estimated in the following discussion.

In the period 1992-94, 39 or roughly half of the 75 main providers delivered training to DEET clients. DEET did not provide information about what programs were funded but stated that –

- The majority of training was delivered under the Jobtrain and Special Intervention Program (SIP) labour market programs.
- A small amount of training was provided through SIP ESL and literacy assessments, Jobskills, LEAP and JobClub programs.
- Most of the individual placements in established courses were funded under the Special Intervention Program for ESL/Literacy training.
- The special courses funded were mostly a mixture of Jobtrain and SIP.

DEET provided data on the numbers of placements and the funding of placements and courses. A number of trends appear in this data, summarised in Table 4.1 –

- The total amount of funding over the three years is less than \$2m and represents some 2000 placements, or less than one tenth of

one percent of annual ACE enrolments in NSW.

- Most of this funding (\$1.7m or 85%) comes through contract training rather than individual placements and goes mostly to the largest providers (evening and community colleges and WEAs).
- In contrast, the smallest providers are being funded for individual placements rather than for contract training – fewer than 50 places were involved in 1994, though this involvement is growing rapidly.

Analysis of the data by provider shows some variability in the participation of individual centres over the period.³ Some have decreased their involvement while others have rapidly expanded their role over the three years since there was more funding gained in 1993 than 1994, and this was true especially of the evening and community colleges. Table 4.2 shows these providers, the amounts of funding obtained and the share (%) of the total funds granted to ACE providers in the period. With few exceptions, the general pattern is for larger providers to gain more funding from contract training.

Smaller providers are clearly less likely to tender for contract training, and this is consistent with their expressed views on the subject. Individual placements are gained with much less administrative effort. Kiama is the only

CAEC to have significant funding from both contract training and placements with over \$30,000 of funding in the period. Yet such an amount can be a very significant boost to the centre's turnover, since it is roughly the equivalent of 6000 student contact hours costed at \$5 per hour – perhaps half a year's income from general courses in an average centre.

The growth in individual placements in CAECs is therefore significant, and points strongly to an area of potential growth as new policies on employment and training encourage more 'self-referral' by unemployed people, and as the CES implements the Job Compact and case management approaches. Equally, the large metropolitan providers, with a much wider range of courses, have great potential for growth in this area.

The focus group provided some anecdotal evidence about providers' experiences with contract training. Colleges are more likely to tender when they know they have the resources, the staff, the physical venues to support a bid and experience of the process. They had clearly learned their lessons from the tendering experience.

These include –

- The benefit of specialising and building strength in one area rather than bidding for scattered services, especially when success in one tender can lead to continuing funding over three years.
- The need to develop skill in submitting for ongoing funding for continuing projects, and sustain the staffing expertise needed for future funding rounds applications.
- The need to recognise the 'opportunity costs' of tendering which need to be weighed against the benefits of higher rates of funding – time and effort invested in competitive tendering which might not pay off.
- The need to recognise the difference between designing a course for a target group and offering a course for the usual 'self-referred' participants in an advertised general course in ACE. The former requires considerable insight into the needs of the clients and skills in developing a service to be provided.

Some providers had developed good links with their local CES and become recognised for their literacy provision or another specialised service. Sydney Community College was now focusing on vocational preference testing. The VET officer of Sydney Community College highlighted the importance of 'self-referral', providing a service to people to try themselves out in different areas for minimal investment:

We're trying not to compete but to develop something that complements existing providers so we're moving into psychological and vocational testing. We have a specific relationship with the CES that no one else can reproduce and that's been a bit more profitable, more secure in some ways once you get that relationship rolling with a government department.

The major thing that I'm seeing at the moment is people who want to change their career paths because they're not happy with the career choices they have made. That's neither contract nor customised, that's self-referral and that would be ninety per cent of what we do, it's certainly vocational education.

In courses such as Jobtrain, providers felt they were less competitive than TAFE who could absorb the 'opportunity costs' of tendering because it was well resourced. It was remarkable that ACE has been as successful as it has been, given the poor infrastructure from which it has made its bids for DEET funding. The Case studies of regional colleges and small centres in Chapter Five provide more detailed accounts of providers' success in defining clear areas where they can provide programs that meet local or regional needs through appropriate labour market programs.

In summary, some larger providers have now accumulated skills in contract training over a number of years, have become more selective in the bids they make and are perhaps most successful where they focus on special needs that can be met in this way. There is scope, however, for small providers to take advantage of individual placements funded through the CES.

Customised Training

Customised training refers to a course which has been designed at the request of a client and provided in ways to meet the specific needs of participants. The negotiation of the content and delivery is the hallmark of customised training. It can be of any duration. The client may be the employer of the participants or another agency such as the CES.

Participants in the focus group believed the costs of customised training outweigh the benefits. Some, in their initial enthusiasm, spent over a year building links with employers only to find that the results did not repay the effort.

They also reported difficulties in organising this form of training. These included the inflexibility of employers, the work and time required in setting up the course, delays experienced in decision-making by potential customers, the long lead time in developing clientele, the uncertain results compared to tendering and the relative inexperience of ACE staff in liaising with potential customers. It was suggested that where an organisation has a staff development or training officer they are more likely to think of TAFE first, and that small businesses without staff development specialists were more likely to come to ACE.

On the other hand, general courses could by 'word of mouth' lead to a special course being set up but this was unusual. Members of the focus group were prepared to supply customised training but not actively seek it. However, it was seen that customised training could lead to a college offering an accredited course within an organisation.

The focus group highlighted ACE's disadvantage in the market-place due to lack of resources and first-rate facilities. Employers appeared to judge ACE by its equipment and facilities, whereas ACE's strength was in its human resources and expertise. Macquarie Community College runs its Business Centre as a separate venture for this reason:

A training person from Kentucky Fried Chicken visited and expressed doubts about our training rooms – we are going to do some work to improve them. He was replaced by a woman who came

out and had a look and said, 'I don't care what you are going to do with them, they're just not adequate for our clientele.'

There's also a possible perception of the resources we're able to bring to bear. You may have an executive from Australia Post or elsewhere who has done a course at some girls high school with horrible parquet flooring that the cleaners won't clean and immediately dismisses it, even though the quality of the training may be great.

Employers were reported to realise that it is much more cost effective to put people through existing ACE courses, than pay a college to customise a program. Perhaps influenced by the Training Guarantee Act, employers are more likely to tell staff to 'go and find it and we'll pay for it'.

Participants were in no doubt that the major contribution of ACE to employer training is through the general program. Self-referral is important in bringing people into a general course. As many as ten people might join a course from one organisation and there was a 'steady trickle' of companies sending employees to a course.

This then highlighted a key issue – how much colleges actually know of the courses they are providing for employers when they use the general program to train their staff. ACE is organised to meet demand through individual enrolments rather than requests of organisations. This highlighted the need for the research to try and determine the degree to which this was occurring. It appears from the discussion that contact with the college is informal more often than not:

One of the postmasters at the main post centre came to a word processing course to test it; we've now trained all the postmasters in Word Perfect. That wasn't an accident, that was planned but not negotiated. [It is] not like the training manager gets in touch with you and books something – he goes out and tests a range of possibilities in a competitive market, chooses one and then starts to feed his staff through on his terms. He may never discuss this with the Principal.

Sometimes a company will be sending staff to the general program on a regular basis but unless you see the cheques coming through you don't necessarily notice this. You have in a way moved into a relationship with an organisation without really knowing it.

Occasionally you get a training officer who identifies himself and says 'I'm going to be sending some people through to you', the fellow from Pirelli Cables does that with us, but usually it's a case of the training officer saying, 'here's a course you should go to', or the person approaching the employer and saying 'This looks good'.

A lot of our standard programs would attract individuals who are paid for by their company but you wouldn't necessarily know this. We often try to take note of this and contact the company in case we can score some customised training.

Providers were clear that unless they had the specialist staff to look for customised training they were unlikely to do much of it and, in any case, could not compete with TAFE which caters to larger businesses. Their focus was small business and it was felt that the diversity of programs matches the diversity of small business needs.

The group identified a number of factors that make ACE attractive to employers. These included the ability to provide courses at a convenient time, and the ability to 'mobilise resources' and 'follow the market very quickly'. ACE can target very specific skills, taking, for example, the 'Windows' part of an IBM computer course and packaging that for one group of employees. The ease of access to courses for the learners was cited. The quality of teachers was highlighted – the market – driven nature of ACE means that teachers need to be good to keep their students, and they have the experience of working with adult learners who will complain if they are not getting their money's worth.

Case Studies of Customised Training

In order to analyse the issues in customised training more deeply, a number of case studies were prepared. These were collected from providers who were asked a number of questions about their experiences, such as –

- Do you have an example of a course that was specially provided for a client? What was the course and who asked for it?
- How did the employer/client come to approach the college? What kind of contact led to the request? Was there some external incentive such as special funding ?
- What did the client want by way of outcomes from the course? How did you assess these? In what respects was the course tailored to the needs of the client?
- How were the learning needs of the participants assessed, and what special features were included to meet them?
- What issues were apparent in setting up and delivering the course? What was learned about tailoring training for clients? How was provision modified for specific vocational needs?
- What was learned about ACE's 'niche' in the training market – who its clients are and why they are likely to use ACE rather than TAFE or a private training provider?

The case studies were based on interviews usually with the person who had negotiated the course or at least been involved in its implementation. The studies confirmed the finding of the focus group and the phone interviews with evening and community college principals that the number of cases of customised training is quite limited. Most colleges had few examples to draw on, and some had to go back at least a year and a half to their most recent example.

Though the case studies were sought in a broad range of subject fields, it appears customised training is demanded by industry mainly in the computing or language and literacy fields. One college had been involved in approximately ten cases this year, mostly in the computing field, although this was a

relatively small percentage of their courses promoted to business and industry.

Again, it was confirmed that most colleges have strong feelings as to the value of developing the tailored training section of colleges. Several of those interviewed felt that for the effort involved in marketing, negotiating and establishing the course, the returns were minimal. Even where there was a high financial return, it was felt that the frequency of courses was not enough to warrant it becoming a major priority. The general conclusion is that colleges feel it is better, where possible, to promote business awareness and enrolments in advertised training programs and put promotional effort into marketing this side of the college.

It has to be borne in mind that the case studies reflect the perception of providers rather than those of participants, employers or tutors. It may be that the other parties involved in the course might have reported different experiences.

Case 1 **Identifying whose needs are important**

An air-conditioning company expressed interest in a WEA offering a course eight sales staff on successful selling for. They wanted a course to fulfil their Training Guarantee obligation and had contacted a number of providers about their services.

A meeting with the company management discussed its needs and what the college could offer. No course in selling skills had previously been offered by the college so it was necessary to develop one. A personal approach, flexibility and price appeared to influence the company to contract the work to WEA. The Successful Selling course ran in the evenings over six weeks and when later advertised in the term brochure it filled 22 places.

The employer had stated what it wanted but it soon became apparent that the staff had different ideas. Only two of the eight staff appeared to be willing participants and the rest brought considerable 'baggage' to the class. The tutor had to adapt the course to include some vocational counselling. It became clear that it would have been better to include the client's staff in planning at the outset. Some

negotiation would have been necessary to establish clear objectives and agreed criteria for course evaluation among the parties – the college, participants and the employer.

Customising a course raises the question of whose view of needs and outcomes should be taken into account, since this clearly affects the participants' motivation to learn and whether the course is a success in their terms.

Case 2 **Competing on flexibility and price**

A special brochure advertises a range of courses to business and industry four times a year. Companies will often contact the business section of the College to discuss the possibility of a course tailored to their training needs. In the past year this has resulted in a course being customised for as many as ten clients.

Recently the Remington company approached the college. Changes in technology now mean that sales representatives must be familiar with IBM computers to effectively sell the current model of fax machines. The employer wanted an 'Introduction to Computing' course which would incorporate the topic of fax-modems, be presented off-site, out-of-hours and over eight weeks rather than in a two day workshop. The Community College was the only provider in the area that would offer the course in this form.

A meeting was organised with the training manager to promote Macquarie's business services. Probable outcomes were outlined first, and then the college attempted to match the appropriate teacher and course with the company's training needs and find an acceptable price. Macquarie has found that though it is more expensive than other ACE providers, its customised courses are considerably cheaper than the commercial providers and TAFE. Macquarie is also preferred because it is responsive and tries to accommodate the employer's needs. Six sales staff were eventually enrolled in the modified Introduction to Computing course.

Macquarie observed that such courses often make heavy demands on the trainer because the group brings its 'office politics' with it. Some participants can be inhibited by the

presence of their superiors being present, or there may be a participant who wants to 'train the trainer'. Some companies may also try to use customised training as a way to solve problems that are unrelated to training by having an entire staff do time management or conflict resolution courses. Judging whether management's request is beyond the scope of mere training is an important aspect of the first consultations with clients.

Case 3 **Negotiating workplace training**

A personal contact through the Narrabeen site coordinator led a manufacturing company to enquire about the possibility of establishing an ESL program on site. There were 16 factory operatives of non-English speaking background who needed assistance with their English.

Negotiations began with the company representative and continued for two months as the needs of the workplace were analysed. In planning the program, the local Literacy Network became involved. Much of the negotiation centred on the kind of content that would achieve a skill level and meet the needs of workers. It appeared that the company felt it should be doing something about the English levels of its multi-lingual workforce, but was not clear about its goals and what could reasonably be expected from the program.

Groups were formed at two levels of English, each with eight participants in a course which ran for ten weeks, two hours per week. Two experienced trainers were placed on site and the workers attended after their shift finished. There were matters to be sensitively handled in conducting the course on the company premises – the spaces used needed to be a welcoming environment. Adequate teaching resources not often found in manufacturing plants were brought in. It was also important to gain the confidence of the company by monitoring participants' experiences and checking periodically with management about their perceptions of progress towards the agreed objectives.

Case 4 **Designing options to meet learning needs**

A large number of highly skilled migrants are employed by a company in Western Sydney which manufactures pacemakers. They are people with highly developed skills, but difficulties with English pronunciation which created workplace communication problems. The company had paid the fees of employees enrolling in evening pronunciation classes. When one of the employees could not attend, they were able to persuade the company to consider an on-site program.

The College literacy coordinator prepared a quotation for a course covering material similar to the evening class, and designed a number of options which varied the cost, course structure and duration in several ways, leaving the company to make a decision. This flexibility was warmly received. The cost per student was also acceptable since it had been set quite low to 'test the market'. The cost was not an issue, and the company formed three classes of six for a ten week program.

The tutor was selected to ensure they were ready to cater to the needs of the client and be available at the time of the classes. They held one session with the company to analyse needs, but most of the course was negotiated in the first classes where the participants' language learning needs were drawn out.

Case 5 **Assessing workplace learning needs**

A mailing to 50 medium sized companies in the region, offering the services of the literacy department, led to the initial enquiry from the Training Manager at Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO). It had a number of highly educated scientists and engineers from overseas who were having difficulty with oral communication and report writing. Over several months the company considered options from ACE, TAFE and AMES, and ultimately chose St George-Sutherland Regional Evening College.

It did so perhaps because of the thoroughness with which the college went about assessing

the needs of the workplace. The consultant conducted interviews with the training department, union representative, participants' supervisors and the participants themselves. Distinct levels of language learning were identified from the assessments and the teacher then spent time visiting the participants' departments, meeting supervisors, and collecting work samples.

The organisation released its employees in two groups of seven during work hours twice a week for 10 weeks. The teacher maintained contact with the training manager and supervisors, and the learners themselves brought language materials to each session and held weekly debriefing sessions. The benefits were evident from the first session.

Case 6 Walking over the road to the course

Following the introduction of office computers, Illawarra Electricity contacted Southern Community College at Nowra regarding an Introduction to Keyboarding course for six male middle managers. The organisation is across the road from the college, a factor which may have led to the enquiry. Although not much of this type of training is done at the ACE, they feel it is worthwhile when it leads to other work and enhances the college reputation.

It was agreed after several meetings to provide a weekly two-hour course for eight weeks during office hours. The course itself did not differ much from the standard keyboarding course but took into account that the participants knew little or nothing about typing. Limiting the class to company employees meant that the all-male group could learn in a non-threatening environment. At the end of the courses they completed a speed test.

There was no doubt that the decision to use the college was based first on flexibility – the ability to provide the course when and how the client wanted it – and second, the price was lower than other providers. But in this case, the proximity of the college was also important – the participants could walk over the road in a few minutes and be in the classroom.

Case 7 Finding out what the customer wants

This was the first time the college provided a tailored course. A local solicitor rang and asked whether the College did computer training and what they would charge. The College said it first needed to know something about them and their employees, which struck them as a 'novel approach'. They had been badly disappointed by a Sydney training company whose 'off the shelf' training was quite inappropriate for their small office.

It seemed the company needed word-processing at two levels. They were getting bottlenecks in moving information between their offices in the town and wanted information about modems. They needed to know about databases and how to set fields. The office staff were not confident, recognised they had knowledge gaps but would not go to a semester-long TAFE course. They wanted something 'here and now'.

The course was tailored in two ways; it was delivered on-site, in their own office environment and on their machines configured to fit the learning objectives. The classes were arranged at the end of the workday with some time off. The course was called 'Introduction to Office Technology' and it involved one 12 hour and one 8 hour unit.

The Principal spoke to the computing teacher who met the office staff and worked through their learning needs and wrote a course outline. The College quoted an hourly rate for instruction, assuming a class of five and costing in the preparatory activities. The Principal checked that the teacher was able to empathise with the client and work in the specific situation. Providing the course on-site was based on deciding whether on-site delivery would help or hinder the learning. Here, they wanted to use their own legal data. The Principal concluded that 'the employer often doesn't know what they really want, and customising the training is working that out'.

In summary, these case studies suggest a number of factors that make for successful customisation of ACE courses –

- being prepared to meet the client's needs for flexibility in the timing, length, venue and content of the course, while recovering

hidden costs of product development, yet remaining competitive in price

- responding quickly to an initial inquiry and being able to assess, at the outset, both the stated and 'unrecognised needs' of the client
- a good understanding of industry and workplace culture by the negotiator and a trainer/tutor who is sensitive to the workplace context
- setting up a process in which the college and employer can evaluate outcomes and seek feedback on quality.

Employers and Participants in ACE Courses

The clear message from consultation with providers is that ACE makes its biggest contribution to training employees through their participation in the general program rather than special programs. The difficulty is in identifying the employers using ACE for their training. Few providers keep systematic records of employer contacts, and the enrolment process, up until now, has been geared to collecting minimal data from students. However, the fee-paying nature of ACE suggested a solution.

The research established that financial data in enrolment records in some larger colleges might identify the names of employers paying for enrolments. One record system can report on the fee-payer where this is different from the name of the person enrolling. Analysis was based on payer name, course of enrolment, postcode and term. Bonafide business or association names can then be identified and spurious records deleted. This data was coded by industry and course type.

There are obviously some limitations to this approach, since it misses those employers paying by means other than cheque, and those who later reimburse fees paid by employees. It does pick up those employers paying for courses for a range of reasons including family members. It ignores those employers who support training through study leave or who advise, approve or know of employees attending ACE. However, the data provides a surprising level of detail about how businesses

and organisations are paying for courses in a college.⁴

The data was obtained from several large providers and was analysed to generate the industry profile for each college, the types of courses paid for by employer type and postcode analysis. The data also gave the information necessary to contact employers for interviews and the survey (see below).

The analysis provides for the first time some glimpses into the way ACE may be serving small business and local organisations and says something about the 'catchments' of these colleges. It supports the claims of Principals that local business is their natural clientele and echoes the focus group finding that employers tend to use the general program rather than request special courses.

Other findings were –

- In 1994, hundreds of small businesses paid for people to attend ACE courses in the largest providers. St George-Sutherland involved over four hundred businesses and organisations, Parramatta and Manly-Warringah over two-hundred and Strathfield, one hundred.
- Many business names appeared to be self-employed people. Generally, more than half appeared to be limited companies. Few were well-known large enterprises, though often paying for several students to do courses.
- The industry profile varied from provider to provider but the Manufacturing, Construction, Wholesale-Retail, Finance, Property and Business, and Community Services are well represented across providers.
- Courses taken tended to be concentrated in the computing and business areas.
- Postcode analysis shows that the business and organisation names were mostly local, confirming that ACE almost exclusively serves local businesses.

These case studies of selected metropolitan colleges, while restricted to those able to provide financial information at the time, represent quite different areas of Sydney. There is a need for further research to follow up these promising data.

St George-Sutherland

The St George-Sutherland Regional Evening College serves an area centred on Sutherland Shire, one of Sydney’s most extensive local government areas. The ‘different payer’ data for this college was complete, and generated a large list that was reduced to the names of 418 businesses and organisations, together with the courses paid for and the postcodes of participants for the four terms of 1994. The majority of these appeared to be sole traders and local businesses, with approximately 210 limited companies.

Figure 4.1 shows the profile of these employers paying for courses when they were classified by ASIC industry group. Compared to the NSW industry profile at the 1991 Census, St George-Sutherland has relatively more employers in Manufacturing and Construction, and marginally more in Wholesale and Retail Trade. It has proportionally fewer in most other industry groups than the NSW profile. There are proportionally fewer employers in the Community Services area though this includes some 49 organisations including churches, schools, child-care, disability services and

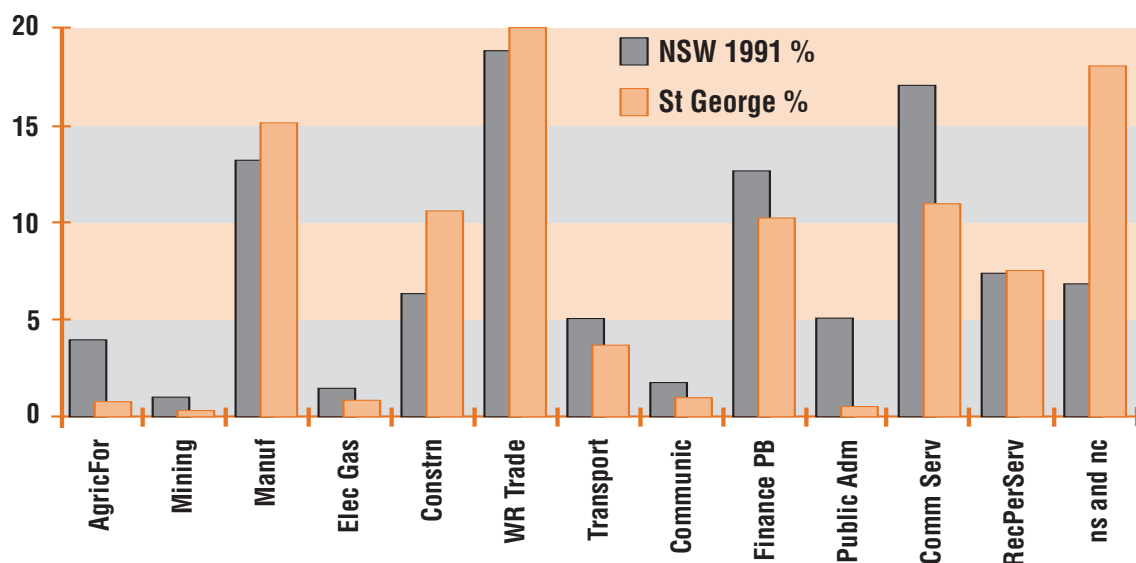
health agencies. (A proportion of business names were not readily classifiable).

A total of 479 courses over four terms were paid for by these 417 businesses and organisations, some paying for multiple enrolments. There is a clear pattern when these courses are analysed by industry and course field of study. Table 4.3 shows that most courses (180 or 37%) were in the Business and Computing areas. and that 100 of these were paid for by employers in Manufacturing, Construction and Wholesale and Retail Trade, the dominant employer groups in the College profile. By contrast, half the courses in the Health field were accounted for by organisations in the Community Services group. Many of these were First Aid courses.

Parramatta Regional Evening College

The Parramatta Regional Evening College operates from numerous centres in the Parramatta area. The 1994 data for this college was also complete and yielded the names of

Figure 4.1 St George-Sutherland REC Employer Profile (n=418)



Courses by Industry Group of Employer:										
Course:	Manu	Const	WRT	Trans	FPB	PubAd	Comms	S Rec	PS Other	Total
Arts, Craft	10	7	13	3	10	0	6	3	25	77
Lang, Comm	5	2	4	1	3	0	1	4	6	26
Computing	24	9	30	2	7	0	7	4	17	100
Business	17	11	13	2	15	0	4	5	13	80
Health	8	6	16	8	8	3	25	5	17	96
Other field	9	16	17	0	11	1	13	12	21	100
Total	73	51	93	16	54	4	56	33	99	479

An analysis of postcodes (Table 4.4) shows that most business names paying for courses are concentrated in postcodes in the shire (Menai to Sylvania) or in nearby southern suburbs along the transport corridor and Botany Bay (Mortdale to Bexley).

Table 4.3 St George-Sutherland REC – Courses and Employers (n=479)

Postcode	n	%	Postcode	n	%
Menai 2234	40	9.6	Mortdale 2223	12	2.9
Engadine 2233	51	12.2	Penshurst 2222	3	0.7
Sutherland 2232	33	7.9	Hurstville Sth	3	0.7
Kurnell 2231	3	0.7	Hurstville 2220	13	3.1
Cronulla 2230	22	5.3	Sans Souci 2219	5	1.2
Caringbah 2229	37	8.9	Carlton 2218	11	2.6
Miranda 2228	22	5.3	Kogarah 2217	14	3.3
Gymea 2227	12	2.9	Rockdale 2216	12	2.9
Jannali 2226	16	3.8	Riverwood 2210	16	3.8
Oyster Bay 2225	4	1.0	Bexley 2207	17	4.1
Sylvania 2224	18	4.3			
			Total	417	90.3

Table 4.4 St George-Sutherland REC: Postcodes of Employers Paying for Courses, 1994

262 businesses and organisations. There were notably more multiple payments – employers paying for more than one course or in more than one term (423 payments). Again, most were small local businesses, with approximately 85 (or 32%) limited companies and 46 community organisations.

Figure 4.2 shows the profile of employers using Parramatta REC based on this data. Six

industry groups are prominent, compared to the NSW profile. There are proportionally more businesses or organisations in the Construction and Finance, Property and Business industry groups paying for participants. Manufacturing, Transport and Community Services are also prominent, with Wholesale and Retail Trade less so. Again, a sizeable proportion of business names are not readily classifiable.

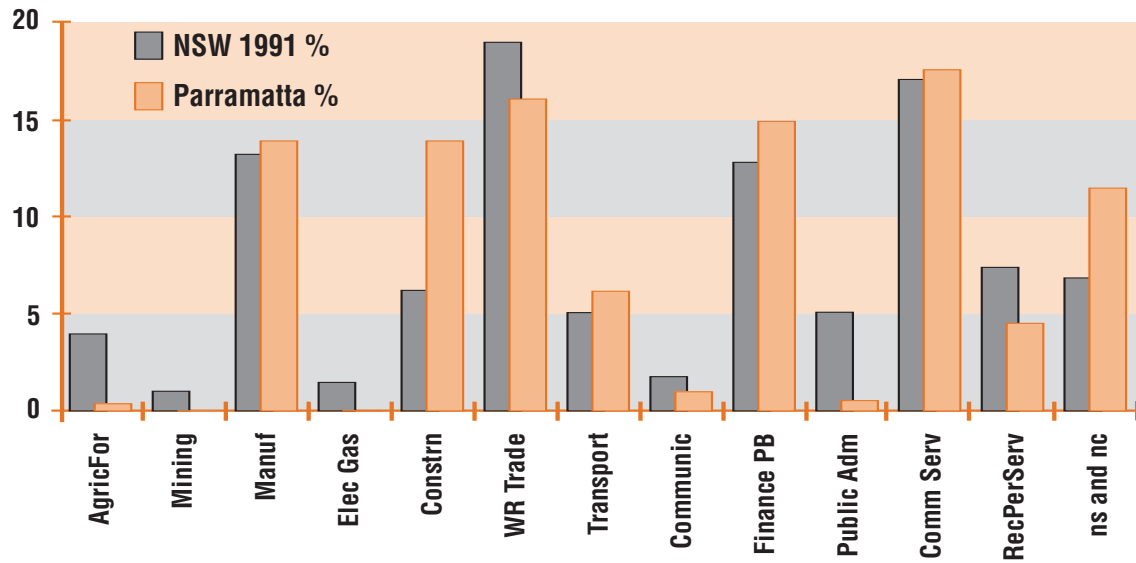


Figure 4.2 Parramatta REC Employer Profile (n=262)

When courses paid for by employers are analysed (Table 4.4) the picture is similar to St-George-Sutherland. Half of all courses (200 or 48%) in 1994 were in the Business and Computing areas, meeting a demand in all the major industry groups represented. Over one third of all courses were computing courses (34%), and this is consistent with the College’s expansion into this area over recent years. Courses in the Health and Arts areas were a significant component of the courses paid for

by employers in the Community Services (and non-classified) industry group.

Postcode analysis (Table 4.6) shows that three-quarters of those employers paying for courses were in the suburbs in or adjoining the City of Parramatta, including Auburn, Granville, Northmead and Merrylands where the College has some nine venues in local schools. Wentworthville, where the college is based and where its computing centre is located, had the largest number of employers participating.

Table 4.5 Parramatta REC: Courses and Employers (n=423)

	Courses by Industry Group of Employer:									Total
	Manu	Const	WRT	Trans	FPB	PubAd	CommS	RecS	Other	
Arts, Craft	2	7	5	2	13	1	21	7	16	74
Lang Comm	10	2	2	1	1	0	6	1	6	29
Computing	24	15	20	13	24	3	34	1	10	144
Business	14	7	11	3	4	1	10	3	13	66
Health	0	4	5	4	6	0	15	2	3	39
Other Serv	0	0	5	1	2	1	2	1	2	14
Other	2	16	7	2	10	0	1	4	5	47
Total	52	53	61	26	60	6	89	19	57	423

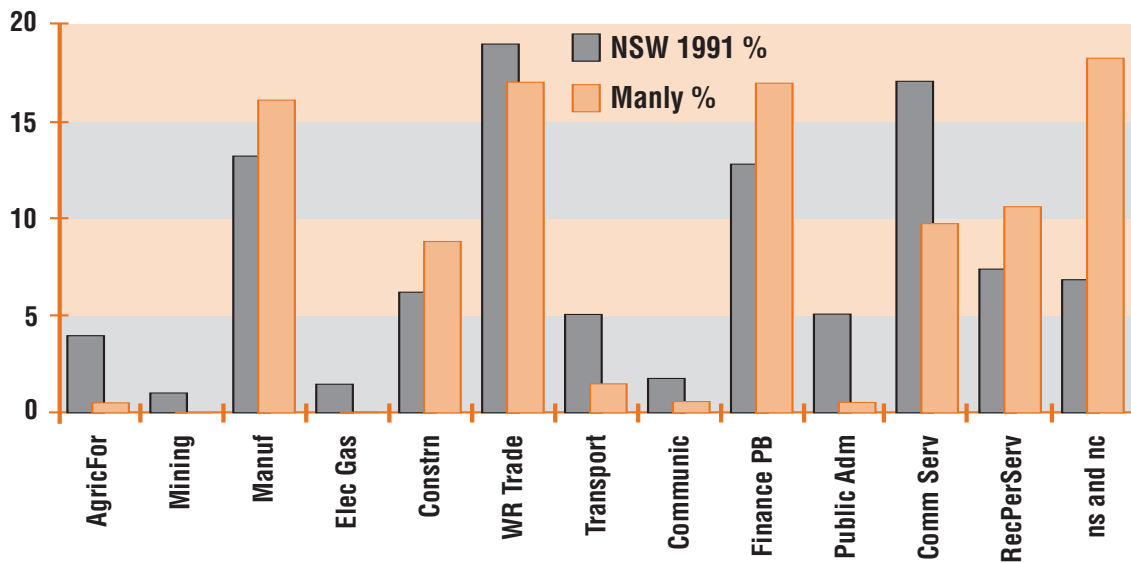


Figure 4.3 Manly-Warringah Employer Profile (n=345)

Manly-Warringah Community College

This College serves the Northern Beaches peninsular of Sydney centred on the Manly and Warringah shires. There were 215 business and association names retrieved from records, including at least 91 limited companies (so-named) and 21 organisations classified as Community Services, mostly schools and pre-

school centres. The rest appeared to be sole traders or self-employed.

The proportions of employers in the Manufacturing and Finance, Property and Business industry groups exceed those of NSW in 1991. This is consistent with the intensive light industry in the area and the French's Forest hinterland. Construction is also well represented compared to NSW. There are relatively fewer names classified as employers

Table 4.6 Parramatta REC: Postcodes of Employers Paying for Courses, 1994

Postcode	n	%	Postcode	n	%
Smithfield 2164	8	3.1	Seven Hills 2147	15	5.7
Guildford 2161	14	5.3	Toongabbie 2146	17	6.6
Merrylands 2160	19	7.3	Wentworthville 2145	49	18.7
Castle Hill 2154	5	1.9	Auburn 2144	13	5.0
Baulkham Hills	28	10.7	Regents Pk 2143	2	0.7
Northmead 2152	4	1.5	Telopea 2117	10	3.8
Nth Parramatta 2151	9	3.4	Blacktown 2148	4	1.5
Parramatta 2150	9	3.4			
			Total	206	78.6

in Community Services and Recreational, Personal and Other Services areas.

Analysing the courses paid for, Manly-Warringah Community College differs somewhat from the other colleges (Table 4.7). A third of all courses (118 out of 345) were in the Health field, some 79 of them being for the St John First Aid certificate, and comprising more than half of the enrolment of Community Services employers. Computing (68 or 20%) and Business (45 or 13%) make up another third of courses, with the remaining third

spread over other fields including Arts (39 or 11%).

The postcode data for this college was complete, in that a postcode existed for nearly every entry. Over 99% of postcodes of employers paying for courses came from northern Sydney and over 90% from the peninsular suburbs such as Harbord, Dee Why, Collaroy and Avalon. This pattern is strikingly consistent with the other colleges where the employer addresses were associated with local postcodes (Table 4.8).

Courses by Industry Group of Employer:										
	Manu	Const	WRT	Trans	FPB	PubAd	Comms	RecS	Other	Total
Arts, Craft	5	2	8	0	5	0	4	5	10	39
Lang, Com	2	8	3	1	1	0	2	5	5	27
Computing	14	2	18	0	10	6	5	3	10	68
Business	4	7	8	1	9	0	0	8	8	45
Health	19	9	10	2	18	0	37	11	12	118
Other Serv	1	0	1	0	4	0	8	0	5	19
Other	5	5	6	1	3	0	0	3	6	29
Total	50	33	54	5	50	6	56	35	56	345

Table 4.7 Manly-Warringah Community College: Courses and Employers (n=345)

Postcode	n	%	Postcode	n	%
Avalon Beach 2107	19	8.7	Harbord 2096	18	8.3
Newport Beach 2106	14	6.4	Manly 2095	12	5.5
Mona Vale 2103	12	5.5	Fairlight 2094	4	1.8
Warriewood 2102	6	2.8	Balgowlah 2093	11	5.0
Narrabeen 2101	22	10.1	French's Forest 2086	10	4.6
Brookvale 2100	12	5.5	Terrey Hills 2084	3	1.4
Dee Why 2099	33	15.1	Other peninsula	7	3.3
Collaroy 2097	14	6.4			
			Total	197	91.6

Table 4.8 Manly-Warringah: Postcodes of Employers Paying for Courses, 1994

Strathfield Regional Community College

The Strathfield 1994 employer sample (n=98) was extracted manually from college records and is relatively small and possibly selective. Figure 4.4 shows that the largest industry groups for NSW – Community Services,

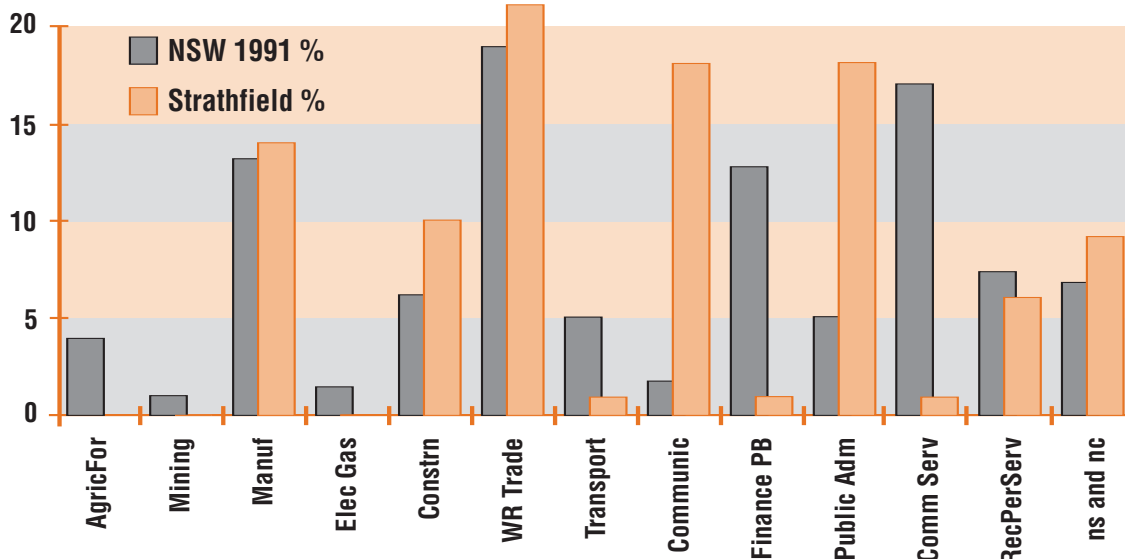
Wholesale and Retail, and Finance, Property and Business – are well represented.

Table 4.9 shows the courses these employers paid for. Again, it is Business and Computing which comprise almost half (49%) of the courses and this field makes up over half the enrolment of Manufacturing, Wholesale-Retail Trade and Finance, Property and Business groups, but less than a third of the enrolments in Community Services and Construction.

Table 4.9 Strathfield RCC: Courses and Employers (n=98)

Courses by Industry Group of Employer:									
Course Field	Manu	Const	WRT	Trans	FPBus	PubAd	CommS	RecPS	Total
Arts, Craft	2	1	3	0	1	0	1	0	10
Lang, Comm	0	2	2	0	1	0	1	1	10
Computing	3	2	5	1	3	1	5	0	21
Business	8	1	8	0	8	0	2	0	27
Health	1	3	1	0	3	0	3	3	15
Other field	0	1	2	0	2	0	6	2	15
Total	14	10	21	1	18	1	18	6	98

Figure 4.4 Strathfield RCC Employer Profile (n=98)



The catchment of Strathfield RCC comprises the suburbs of Strathfield, Ashfield, Burwood, Croydon, Concord, Fivedock, Canterbury and Campsie and includes some of the smallest municipalities in NSW. Analysis of the postcodes recorded (though this data is less than complete) suggests that at least half the participants live within the immediate catchment, with a further quarter in adjacent LGAs.

Employer Perceptions of ACE and Training

The final phase of the industry study was to contact employers through interviews and a mail survey to document their views of ACE and its role in training. Thirty six (36) full interviews were completed from 124 contacts with at least one response from each of the lists of employers generated from several sources.⁵ The employer survey used a more extensive database of employers than the interviews, augmented by data from additional colleges returning financial records. A one page, reply paid questionnaire was mailed to some 1200 addresses in December 1994 with follow-up mailing in January-February 1995. The mail survey was an abbreviated form of the telephone interview and canvassed similar questions (see Appendix 4). There were 206 replies (17%) in the final sample.

The first part of the survey and interview explored knowledge and use of adult and community education. The second part asked employers to respond about their training needs and the methods by which these are met, and asked them about their views of short courses such as those provided by ACE. Finally, employers were asked to provide brief details about the business, its type and size, and the number of employees.

The employers responding varied in size, the majority being small businesses. Over two thirds (140 or 68%) had fewer than 20 employees including a third with fewer than 5. About half had an annual turnover not exceeding \$500,000. There were also some sizeable businesses represented – about 20%

had more than 50 employees and a third an annual turnover of more than \$1m. The employers responding to the interview ranged from large public organisations with hundreds of employees to small family or jointly-owned businesses with a few employees. The most forthcoming interviews were often from those in personnel or training or a managing director or owner, and it seems likely that there was a tendency for larger employers to respond to the survey and that smaller businesses of the kind described in the college case studies are under-represented.

Almost all of those employers in the sample were concentrated in the five main industries represented in the college case studies including manufacturing (48 or 23%), wholesale-retail trade (36 or 18%), construction (19 or 9%), finance, property and business services (26 or 13%) and community services (50 or 24%). It is notable that manufacturing is as well represented as community services. Two thirds of employers were in the private sector and the remainder in the public sector (15%) or organisations identifying themselves as 'community sector' (13%).

The findings of this employer survey are, in summary:

- ACE is not well known among these employers. Less than half (43%) said they knew a lot about ACE or local college courses, suggesting that providers and the Board may need to promote the range of areas where vocational courses are offered.
- Interviews revealed that employers tend to perceive ACE rather narrowly as recreational and assume vocational courses are limited mainly to computer skills.
- When asked about their training needs, expressed in terms of the areas of the Mayer key competencies, three-quarters of those interviewed indicated use of computing technology, communication skills, and teamwork as priority areas, a result strikingly consistent with participants' views of course outcomes.
- Almost all employers (80%) favoured in-house training among methods of training, with smaller proportions using external courses in some way. Less than a tenth of employers paid fees, gave employees time

off or expected them to do a course in their own time. A larger proportion of those interviewed favoured training through external courses compared with those surveyed.

- More employers (40%) stated that practical relevance is the main factor in deciding on a course, ahead of timing, local access and quality of tutoring, and these factors are more important than cost. Interviews revealed that small businesses favoured short courses in ACE that were provided in some flexible way or after-hours.
- Interviews probed the issue of accreditation and suggested that most employers would like to see more short course certification, which was useful and valuable if recognised in industry and the employee's field of employment.

Knowledge of ACE

Despite the fact that the employer contacts were established through provider sources, a number of responses revealed poor knowledge of ACE and its courses. Less than half (43%) said they knew a lot about the local college (28 or 14%) or knew about ACE courses in general (58 or 28%). A majority knew 'little' (78 or 38%) or 'nothing' (40 or 19%) about ACE courses.

The interviews revealed a similar pattern. Seven employers (a fifth of those interviewed) had no knowledge of ACE courses or local providers, even with considerable explanation and prompting by the interviewer, possibly because the contact person was not responsible for training. Another seven had slight knowledge of ACE courses, but were not familiar with local providers. Employers unsure about ACE tended to equate adult education with university, TAFE, Continuing Education, or 'anything older students do'. A handful were quite hostile to ACE providing vocational courses, comparing them unfavourably with TAFE.

ACE may therefore need to do more to publicise its breadth of provision, in particular to promote its range of offerings in vocational areas. Credibility and quality, issues for some employers, will be addressed through better

articulation with TAFE and through accreditation procedures.

Unlike the survey, the interviews explored whether someone from their organisation had enrolled in ACE in 1994, given that the contact was being made because someone had enrolled. Many responded positively, as might be expected, and they indicated a range of courses undertaken within the areas of computing, first aid and management or supervisory training. However, employers' perceptions of the scope and use of ACE courses often appear to be limited mainly to computer skills, and emphasise ACE's contribution to recreational activities.

Whether it was known if anyone had undertaken ACE courses seemed to depend on the size and complexity of the organisation. Courses were usually undertaken by other employees, but where the contact person had taken the course they were usually very positive about their ACE training experience.

Key competencies and training needs

The employer survey provided an opportunity to assess how employers perceive training needs in terms of the key competencies. They were asked to state 'in which of the following areas is training most needed in your business?' Most employers indicated that from 2 to 3 competencies were important. The main perceived areas of training need were Using technology (122 or 60% of respondents), Communicating (95 or 46%), Working with and relating to others (90 or 44%) and Planning and organising (91 or 44%). The interviews revealed a similar pattern of response where using computers was frequently mentioned in regard to using technology. (Table 4.10).

This finding is strikingly consistent with the finding of the ACE participant survey (Chapter Three) and is remarkable for the convergence of employer and participant perceptions. The interviews also showed that these categories were meaningful for employers describing their training needs. A few commented that the categories were too generalised, with a single

Key Competency	Mail n	Survey %	Interview (n=36) %
Using technology, tools, equipment	122	59.2	75.0
Communicating in various ways	95	46.1	77.8
Working with others, teamwork	90	43.7	75.0
Measuring, estimating, calculating	32	15.5	27.8
Planning and organising	91	44.2	61.1
Finding and sorting information	23	11.2	38.9
Solving problems	57	27.7	58.3
Understanding other cultures	21	10.2	41.7

Table 4.10 Employers’ Training Needs – Mayer Competencies

employer saying that none was relevant to them.

Though the survey sample is too small to draw many conclusions, there appear to be few, if any, differences in training need between the industry groups. ‘Working with others’ is marginally more important for Community Services employers than it is for the other main industry groups.

A further question asked about the areas in which training was needed during the year. The greatest needs were perceived to be in the

business and computing area, health and communications (Table 4.11). There are also some differences in the kind of courses needed by the main industry groups responding. While Business and computing is demanded across the board, Health courses are, for example, demanded more by Manufacturing and Community Services employers. This pattern is remarkably consistent with the evidence from college case studies about the courses actually paid for by employers and again confirms the emerging picture of ACE’s training role.

Table 4.11 Main course area where training is needed (n=206)

Responses (n=196) by main industry represented –						
Course area	n	%	Manu	WRT	FPB	Comms
Business or computing courses	144	69.9	31	19	20	29
Communications, languages	38	18.4	3	7	3	13
Health, safety or recreation	61	29.6	16	4	1	22
Basic education, literacy	10	4.9	4	1	0	1
Arts and crafts	7	3.4	1	0	0	4
Cooking	17	8.3	6	2	0	2

Interestingly, Table 4.11 suggests that basic education and literacy is not perceived as an area of significant training need – less than 5% of the employers nominate this area. Manufacturing accounts for half of this response. In view of the concerted emphasis on raising levels of literacy in the workforce, this could be a disturbing trend if it were found in the employer population at large.

Choice of training

When employers obtain training for employees in new skills, most use in-house training and external courses. The great majority said they provided training 'in-house, on the job' (163 or 80%), and 60% said they used external courses, mostly at the suggestion of the business who bore the cost (80 or 39%) rather than at the suggestion of staff (45 or 22%). Interviewed employers stated that general, professional and trades courses were undertaken in-house, or in TAFE, or provided by external consultants. Courses were provided by TAFE, university, private training organisations, consultants, employers' associations, Institute of Management, and specialist suppliers of machinery and technology. Smaller employers

favoured employees taking external courses, because of the expense of bringing in consultants. The interviews suggested that it was more likely for larger businesses to provide in-house training for general staff and send specialist staff to external courses and generally confirmed a picture of the employers using a combination of in-house and external training, with relatively few giving staff time off to attend.

This is consistent with the findings of the surveys reported in the Industry Perspective (Chapter Two). The fact that almost all the employers participating in the survey acknowledged the need for and use of external courses again confirms the demand for business-oriented short courses and the scope for ACE to market its courses to employers' needs.

The interview then asked about employers' views of training, their training needs and methods of obtaining training. Employers were asked to indicate the factors that would be important in deciding on a provider of an external training courses, and to indicate which factors would be most important to them in choosing between ACE and TAFE (Table 4.12).

A clear pattern emerges from this data and this is further confirmed by the interviews. Twice as many employers (81 or 39%) say that is whether the course is practical and relevant

Table 4.12 Factors In Choosing External Courses (n=203)

Course Choice Factor	Important*		Most Important*	
	n	%	n	%
enrolling is easy	54	26.2	3	1.5
course is at a convenient time	154	74.8	31	15.0
course is available nearby	141	68.4	36	17.5
course is practical and relevant	167	81.1	81	39.3
course is the right number of weeks	24	11.7	5	2.4
courses give access to equipment	44	21.4	5	2.4
course is taught by quality tutors	128	62.1	24	11.7
the course fees are inexpensive	89	43.2	12	5.8
* Multiple responses				

is the **most important** factor, compared with those nominating any other factor, including timing (31 or 15%), nearby availability (36 or 18%) and tutor quality (24 or 12%) though all these factors are important considerations. According to the interviews, too, employers' concerns centre around practical relevance, as otherwise, training is 'a waste of time and money'.

Although timing, location, length and cost of courses were important for many employers, responses were varied. One employer was emphatic that courses should be 'short and sweet', while others expressed the view that courses need to be as long as is necessary to learn the skill. Course location and timing depended very much on the size and location of the business. Large organisations are able to send employees to external courses at some distance away in work time, whereas small businesses are less able to manage without key personnel.

The interviews indicated that the quality of courses offered was a concern. Several employers had variable experiences with courses in the ACE sector, but others relied on recommendation and feedback from colleagues and employees in order to assess quality and value before committing themselves. There were some negative views expressed about the merits of ACE compared to TAFE, which might be partly explained by the questions being phrased in terms of choosing between ACE and TAFE.

Interestingly, while cost was a concern to most businesses, it was a secondary consideration to quality provision and the practical

benefits and applications of external training courses.

Employers interviewed were asked about the importance of such factors as accreditation and articulation, and it appears that employers would like to see more short course certification. In most cases, it was perceived as motivating the employee/trainee, and contributing to their career planning. The view was expressed strongly that certification was useful and valuable if recognised in industry and the employee's field of employment.

Finally, there appeared to be few differences between the employer's industry group or sector of the economy in the main factors important to them in choosing a course.

In summary, the survey of employer perceptions about training and the role of ACE are consistent with other findings of the research – the demand for business, computing and health courses, and the importance employers attach to practical and relevant courses of quality. It is very significant that employers nominate the Technology, Communication, Planning and Teamwork key competencies as areas of training need, for it is these areas that participants highlight as outcomes of their courses.

The review of customised and contract training suggests that ACE has a larger potential role in labour market services and vocational placement. At the same time, the brief college case studies highlight the effectiveness of ACE providers in meeting their local employer needs. In short ACE is performing a number of training roles in the VET system. The research suggests that it now needs to address quality assurance issues and market its services to industry more effectively.

Notes

- 1 It was originally planned to map contract and customised training in terms of provider type and location, funding turnover, numbers of students, type of student (labour force status) and to classify courses by field of study and type of outcome and in the case of customised training to classify sponsoring employers or organisations by size of enterprise, industry group, location and other variables. The lack of available data has restricted the research in this respect. A closer analysis of data held by DEET would be rewarding.
- 2 It was first proposed to survey providers and compile a database about their special provision, its characteristics and the outcomes of courses and to develop a way to classify different kinds of courses such as JobTrain or JobClub according to factors such as their target learner population and the directness of their involvement with the labour market, the source and extent of funding. The focus group made it clear that this was not practicable.
- 3 Although Central West Community College is known to have won large amounts of DEET funding from 1992 – 1994, it does not appear in the data supplied by DEET.
- 4 Business names were checked against the White Pages and phoned to check the nature of the business, where this not clear from the record. The classification may reflect some nominal business activity. Holding companies classified to Finance group will over-estimate the activity in this group. Those businesses treated as 'not-classifiable' include some shelf companies and others not actively trading, for example, investment companies, as well as small sole traders who work from home and have no business phone. This is consistent with the overall picture of the smallest businesses enrolling in courses in ACE. Obviously, some businesses may not be trading as publicly as others.
- 5 Employers were selected for interview using systematic sampling from seven lists of employers supplied by providers (WEA Sydney, Nepean and Blacktown), or generated from the database developed from financial records, (St George-Sutherland, Manly-Warringah and Macarthur), or obtained from 77 students from the participant survey (Chapter Three) who said their employer had assisted their enrolment and who completed contact details. The contact lists therefore sampled a population of employers who were most likely to know of ACE, and be able to give their views on training through short courses. As the response rate indicates, relatively few of those selected were prepared to give a full interview.

The Regional Perspective on Outcomes

BECAUSE ACE HAS A SIGNIFICANT presence in rural areas, it is important to view vocational outcomes of ACE from a regional perspective and understand its role in meeting local and regional needs for vocational education and training.

In the last twenty years there has been no shortage of reports and initiatives which have addressed the problems of participation in and access to post-compulsory education in rural Australia. Yet a recent review by NBEET concluded that these efforts 'have proven only marginally effective' and that 'the provision of post-compulsory education and training... for non-metropolitan Australians remains uneven and inadequate' (NBEET, 1991, xi). This review concluded that one solution was the cross-sectoral co-ordination of provision in formal education, adult education and industry training as part of a national strategy (1991, xv).

This chapter -

- reviews the literature on rural education, the development of the community college model for TAFE and the growth of regional and local ACE provision in rural NSW
- suggests in this review that the search for a model of TAFE that is responsive to local and regional needs led to the 'community college' model, and argues that the restructuring of TAFE and other factors have created a new division of educational labour in which ACE is expected to take a larger role in VET, and therefore, that cross-sectoral co-ordination is a high priority
- presents case studies of two regional 'community colleges' of ACE that have been successful in targeting groups with specific vocational needs, diversifying their funding base and positioning themselves as significant providers of vocational education and training in the area
- presents five case studies of Community Adult Education Centres (CAECs) which illustrate a wide range of social and economic contexts (suburban, coastal, rural urban and isolated rural) and describes their role in meeting VET needs at the local level
- concludes that there is abundant evidence that ACE is expanding its vocational role at the local and regional level, but that more

rapid progress towards greater cross-sectoral co-operation is an urgent priority if the recommendations for a national strategy are to be realised.

The regional and rural perspective

In the last twenty years, numerous reports have highlighted the educational needs of adults in rural areas and made recommendations on how best to provide for those needs. Through the 1980s, adult community education came to be regarded as an integral part of that provision, notably in the review of rural education in NSW, *Listening and Responding* (Education Commission, 1984, 24ff). For some years there has also been an awareness of the importance of regional development, and the training reform agenda has focussed attention on the VET needs of regions.

In 1991 the National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) published *Towards a National Education and Training Strategy for Rural Australians* which noted that further progress in remedying the disadvantage of rural people in access to VET would only be achieved through a national and sectoral co-ordination. Recently, the Federal Government's White paper on Employment and Growth, *Working Nation*, undertakes to support a greater role for regions in national development (pp 17-19), and the policy paper, *Developing Australia: A Regional Perspective* (Kelty, 1993) stresses the need to make vocational education and training responsive to local and regional needs.

The term regional and rural perspective signifies that in country regions there are both urban and rural communities, while it is also true that there are major regional differences within metropolitan regions. The term also signifies that the picture is more complicated than our traditional images of the 'the city and the bush'. This perspective can be outlined in terms of such factors as the nature of the rural economy, the diversity across and within rural areas and the importance of local and regional identity in creating specific needs for

vocational education and training. It also highlights the issue of participation by rural people in decisions about service delivery.

• The character of the rural economy.

Numerous reports (Schools Commission, 1988; NBEET, 1991) have described the rural economy and what this implies for the role of education. Since 1980 there has been a deepening 'agricultural crisis' – falling commodity prices, a marked fall in farm incomes and rising farm debt and debt service costs. Farm employment is limited and farmers are taking on part-time non-farm work. Recession and drought has a drastic multiplier effect on local business, employment and population growth. Past farming practices have made land degradation a significant environmental problem. Yet the rural economy returns at least a third of the nation's export income (Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1988, 9-12; NBEET, 1991, 11 – 12).

• Diversity of rural communities.

While they differ in their access to educational opportunities and thinly-spread resources, rural regions are also diverse in their needs, and provision needs to acknowledge this. There are wide variations, for example, in distances separating towns or in whether a single industry such as wool or mining supports the area (School Commission, 1988). In a crucial point for the development of VET, NBEET noted the 'diversity of rural economies, a diversity which differs significantly from metropolitan economies in that economic activities are widely scattered among a range of regions and towns, and are found in a variety of combinations of activities' (NBEET, 1991, 11). This implies that local and regional needs for VET are often specific and therefore best met by regionally responsive provision.

• Population changes in rural areas.

It appears rural areas are holding their populations. There is a reversal of the trend for Australians to concentrate in the major cities and more people are said to be opting for the advantages of a rural lifestyle (Schools Commission, 1988, 9-12). It also appears that smaller towns generally are growing as rapidly as larger centres, though some towns highly

dependent on agriculture are in decline (NBEET, 1991, 9). Nevertheless, vigorous regional centres enjoy more services, and educational and employment opportunities. This increases isolation and poses difficulties in providing adult education in smaller communities.

• **Regional and local identity.**

Regional character is created by many factors – landform and climate, the history of settlement and its economic and social development. Regional development has been seen as crucial for sustaining rural infrastructure and export income, and regional identity is now emphasised as the basis for tourism. Again, as the work of Budge shows (cited in NBEET, 1991, 10), there is a range of types of rural areas which vary in their economic base and rate of population growth – for example, areas with diverse economies and sustained growth such as the Central West of NSW. These areas may also be quite unequal in their access to educational opportunities.

• **Rural disadvantage and the needs of certain groups.**

Reports have highlighted how distance and isolation disadvantages rural population in their access to services (Education Commission, 1984; Fitzgerald, 1976). While all rural dwellers are not equally disadvantaged, certain groups are most affected by the lack of services. The adult education and training needs of rural Aboriginal people are well-documented (Foley and Flowers, 1990). Women and young people have specific needs for health, education or welfare services. Rural youth in small communities can be particularly affected as Weekes demonstrated in her study of part of the isolated Snowy River and Bombala Shires (Weekes, 1991).

• **Community participation and co-ordination.**

The *Listening and Responding* (Education Commission, 1984) review recognised the ‘central place of community in the decision-making process’ and the different means of consultation about needs and provision that existed. It stressed the need for co-operation and co-ordination between educational and

other agencies in maximising access to resources (Education Commission, 1984, 1-2). That review also noted that while informal education activity has increased in response to community needs, there were ‘many adults whose needs, aspirations and expressed priorities for education are not met’ often because these people do not actively seek education or training (1984,19).

These characteristics have an effect on the way adult education is perceived. They also affect participation in adult education and influence its role in vocational education and training. A number of key issues emerge from the reports.

- The ‘agricultural crisis’ is generating new sets of educational and training needs for rural communities.

Australia is experiencing a rural recession, due to factors such as falling commodity prices and structural change in the economy. Pressures for higher productivity have led to increased technical demands on farm workers in the areas of chemical use, financial management, techniques for improving productivity, increasing self-sufficiency and changing land-use practices to address the sustainability of agriculture. At the same time, as farming becomes more marginal, it is harder to meet the costs of their own education (fuel, fees, course materials). Long hours on family-run farms further limit the time available for attending courses in town, (NBEET, 1991, 12 – 13).

- Many rural centres are facing reduced services in many areas including vocational education and training.

As NBEET noted (1991, 13) there is a trend for government and private corporations to rationalise their activities in lean economic times, resulting in the loss to communities of services such as banks, hospitals, rail links and schools. Government has become more managerial, and often reduced services for smaller centres, including educational outreach. The decade since 1984 has seen the restructuring of higher education, TAFE and adult education in NSW (Scott, 1990). At the same time the more active role of the CES and DEET has introduced more targeted programs and affected how needs are seen and what provision is made.

- The very rapid growth of community adult

education in country centres has given it recognition as an integral part of total education provision.

The development of colleges and community adult education centres was noted in *Listening and Responding* (1984, 24-26). The same report said that adult education should be seen broadly, and it noted the range of agencies with an interest in its provision including government departments such as the Arts, Agriculture and Community Services. In her review, Hansen (1991, 231) describes the rapid growth of adult community education Australia-wide, and notes that it has had the force of a social movement and one mainly carried by women. Rural adult community education has come to symbolise the way communities can take 'grassroots action' to identify and organise adult education relevant to their needs.

- There has been continuing debate on the model of provision that will best serve to identify the education and training needs of rural communities.

While there has been a good recognition of the needs of rural communities, there has been almost continuous change in the way services are delivered. An enduring theme has been how communities are to be given a say in identifying their needs and how scarce resources can be spread in an effective way. The 'grassroots' and self-regulating character of community education has been an important means of increasing participation in what is delivered. Finally, the need for increased opportunities and the potential role of ACE in providing these opportunities, has never been greater, as NBEET concluded:

In the light of [a] hostile economic climate and the structural changes taking place around the world, it is quite evident that the great majority of the rural workforce will have to be trained and or retrained to achieve a broader skill base within their traditional industries or even transfer to and follow quite different vocational paths... (1991, 13).

The above themes are further explored in the following sections that deal with the role of TAFE and the development of regional ACE provision.

Regional needs and the role of TAFE.

How best to meet the vocational and education and training needs of rural communities has for two decades been intimately linked to the scope and direction of TAFE. Its expansion into rural outreach at the end of the 1980s occurred at the same time as a very rapid development of community adult education centres and growing recognition of the need to make government services more responsive to the diverse needs of rural and regional communities. The changes in TAFE coincided with a *modus operandi* that gave more play to community needs. A rural and regional perspective on ACE outcomes must take into account these developments.

The report of the Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education (The Kangan Report) highlighted the fact that rural communities were disadvantaged in their access to further education (Kangan Report, 1975). The Fitzgerald Report *Poverty and Education in Australia* (1976) re-stated the need for better regional provision of post-compulsory education and strongly endorsed the 'North American community college' model for further education outside the major cities. In several states, notably NSW, Victoria and South Australia, there were moves to develop TAFE Colleges with a stronger regional focus (Beswick et al, 1983; Hill and Parkinson, 1978).¹ Table 5.1 summarises the main characteristics of the community college as they were understood in the 1980s and as they continue to apply to ACE in NSW and Victoria.

In NSW, the Correy Report (1978) examined the feasibility of such a development in the New England and Orana regions based on existing TAFE Colleges. By 1981 the Orana Community College had been given a broad charter to identify and meet the post-compulsory education needs of the region. At this time, TAFE policy was committed to 'community responsiveness' through regionalisation of colleges, the establishment of local and regional consultative committees, and a brief to identify and meet the vocational and further education needs of their locality. Outreach, Adult Literacy and Labour Market Programs grew rapidly.

Responsiveness to the community	The college is governed by an autonomous body broadly representative of the community
Open door admission policy	Admission to courses is open, subject to assessment of appropriate bridging experiences
Counselling function of the college	Staff are skilled in advising potential students on their options and directions
Multi-purpose curriculum	The curriculum includes university entry programs, para-professional and trade training, adult and continuing education, and remedial and basic education.
Decentralised college services	Colleges tend to decentralise their facilities throughout the community; the college is multi-campus
Flexible attendance	Program delivery is adapted to the needs of the client group; enrolment is possible at different times during the year
Liaison with employment agencies	Colleges develop close relationships with labour market agencies in planning courses

Table 5.1 Major Features of the Community College Model (Dennison, 1976)

Since the mid-1980s, the imperatives of industry restructuring, the training reform agenda and the need to rationalise resources and assure quality demanded by the Scott Review (Scott, 1990) have led TAFE to re-introduce a strong industry training focus and to soften the emphasis on 'community' needs.²

The Scott Review had a brief to rationalise and re-focus the TAFE system. It saw that ACE could help to fill the community role that was said to over-extend the TAFE system, and made a recommendation *inter alia* that less viable country colleges should become 'ACE colleges' under the aegis of the new Board. This recommendation was never implemented, though it was doubtful any town would have countenanced the loss of 'their Tech'.³

Since that time, some of the larger evening colleges have taken the 'community college' as a model for their operation as community-

managed organisations. This shift of the 'community college' model from TAFE to ACE in NSW is one of the remarkable features of the changes in VET in NSW in the period and is further explored through the regional college case studies reported in this chapter.

Regional economic development has been a powerful rationale for the development of provision in TAFE colleges, from the time of the community college model, and continues to be the case. The definition of economic development zones such as the Green Triangle (South Western Victoria bordering South Australia) and the Murray Riverlands area are two cases in point. *Working Nation* (1994, 19) emphasises the importance of VET becoming more responsive to regional training needs, and the 1995 NSW State Training Profile describes the regional needs for vocational education and training based on an industry analysis.

Therefore an important question for ACE providers expanding into VET courses is the planning framework for regional economic development.

In summary, there are a number of important implications for assessing the vocational outcomes of ACE from this understanding of the developments in TAFE since 1975.

- At the same time that TAFE moved away from an ethic of 'community responsiveness', adult education was being restructured as a form of community-managed provision that propelled it towards the 'community' ideal.
- The re-focussing of TAFE on industry-accredited, longer courses led TAFE to abandon the community college model and the burden of meeting the full range of adult and vocational education needs in a locality. Since 1988 TAFE has devolved its administration but rationalised its provision in country regions.⁴
- Adult community education developed rapidly as part of the new emphasis on community responsiveness and, with other community-based providers including Skillshare, now meets some of the demand for short courses once also provided by TAFE.
- TAFE and other VET providers have a pivotal role in regional economic development. Co-ordination with other providers is needed if the system is to meet the full range of local and regional needs for VET.

The Regional Organisation of ACE in NSW

Hansen (1991) notes that the twin problems raised by the growth of rural ACE are access to resources and the co-ordination of provision. One result of the period of rapid growth was a 'plethora of providing agencies', which Hansen says results from several causes – the diversity of needs, the 'encouraging and resourcing of ad hoc developments' and changing government priorities (1991, 237). Inevitably, the patchwork of provision has made co-ordination a prime issue. Since Hansen wrote, the inclusion of

ACE in the emerging VET system has accentuated the importance of this issue.

In the last decade, a significant step in improving co-ordination of provision has been the establishment of Regional Councils of Adult Education. These are incorporated as community organisations in their own right. They represent the Board of Adult and Community Education in their region, and promote, encourage and support the work of agencies. The Regional Councils have a broad membership which typically includes representatives of higher education institutions, TAFE, School Education, the CES or DEET, Agriculture and other government departments, and representatives of regional evening college and CAECs.

Regional Adult Education Officers employed by each Council perform a strategic role in liaising with and promoting networking among providers. With the growth of VET in ACE, the Regional officers have been a key force in assisting providers, especially the smaller CAECs to target vocational education and training needs and respond to these. There are several parameters affecting the regional provision of ACE⁵.

- The development of agencies in each region has been different. Each region has a history which has influenced the provision. Thus different models have evolved. Regional Officers are naturally conscious of the way this history affects their role.
- The principle of locally-run and locally-managed adult education has been central to the expansion of ACE in smaller centres. Whether 'anything happens' in adult courses in small isolated towns depends on local committees, who continue to be the main force in extending adult education in rural areas.
- Regional co-ordinators have played a key role in supporting the entry of small providers into VET courses. They have assisted CAECs to run accredited courses (such as Medical Terminology) first developed by larger colleges.
- Working with regional literacy co-ordinators, they have similarly been able to extend the reach of literacy programs in smaller towns sometimes by negotiating workplace literacy programs run through the CAECs.

- In general, they have supported initiatives by the CAECs and assisted them to extend the range of provision through funding such as the Board's Special Needs program.

Historically, the Board has had to perform a difficult role in balancing the demands of different kinds of providers, and Regional Councils have inherited this problem in their brief to co-ordinate provision (Hansen, 1991, 240). The Small Centre case studies described later in this chapter provide many examples of this expanded role for CAECs that is supported by the regional structure.

The co-ordination of regional ACE has also been achieved in another way – through the development of the Regional Evening or Community Colleges (as they are increasingly known). Their development occurred at the same time as the mushrooming growth of the CAECs. While there are colleges in many of the Board's nine administrative regions, the numbers of CAECs vary greatly from region to region. When the former Board of Adult Education introduced the regional structure in the mid-1980s, some CAECs were absorbed into the new regional evening colleges, though others insisted on maintaining their local identity and were incorporated as community associations. As Hansen notes, the issue of co-ordination in rural ACE is inevitably linked to issues about the relative merits of regional and local organisations and their relationship.

The 1984 Education Commission Review saw three linked problems of 'the multiplicity of funding agencies, the insecurity of sustained funding and the inflexibility of existing funding models' (1984, 32), but the report undoubtedly marked a high point of optimism about the value of community responsiveness in post-compulsory education. Since then, various developments, especially in TAFE and higher education, have somewhat watered this down – for example, the loss through amalgamation of the strong regional focus of the former Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE) and the end of the Orana Community College experiment (cf Education Commission, 1984,39-40).

As a result, there now appears to be a new division of educational labour in which ACE has inherited a potentially larger role in providing for local and regional needs. The

expansion of ACE centres into VET and the development of the rural community colleges is fuelling a long-running debate about the best forms of 'community responsive' provision by ACE. This review of the literature suggests, however, that the key issue of the cross-sectoral co-operation is more significant for the future of ACE than argument about the relative merits of community colleges or CAECs in meeting adult education needs.

Many features of the post-compulsory education and training picture have changed in the past decade, but the issues of poor co-ordination and inflexible funding have it seems only gained in magnitude. The 1991 Review by NBEET amplified the conclusions of earlier reports when it recommended a concerted national effort to achieve cross-sectoral and inter-governmental co-ordination, regional consultative mechanisms, client-input and flexibility of resourcing and delivery (1991, 55).⁶ It stated as one of its six policy principles:

The most appropriate organisational structure for education and training in non-metropolitan areas is based on co-ordinated cross-sectoral provision i.e. schools, TAFE, higher education, adult education, industry-based training (1991, 55).

The Review's first recommendation is for a high-level Coordinating Committee, whose functions would include:

the development of appropriate inter-agency mechanisms to improve coordination of administrative and funding procedures within and across systems... [and] facilitating linkages across existing rural and education training networks (community-based, industry-based, system or institutionally-based) to support effective client input into the planning and delivery of education and training programs... (1991, 53).

In summary, an important issue for the research on the vocational outcomes of ACE from a regional rural perspective is the role that ACE is taking within the broad picture of VET provision. For this reason, the regional and local case studies made the relationships and linkages between ACE and other VET providers a focus of the case studies.

Community Adult Education Centres (CAECs) in NSW

The smallest forty CAECs accounted for less than ten percent of all ACE enrolments in 1993, and this share appears to be decreasing (ACE Statistical Collection, 1994). Table 5.2 shows the varying distribution of CAECs in the Board’s nine administrative regions. Nearly half are found in the New England/North West and North Coast regions, while there are few in the Orana, Central West and Riverina.

CAECs began to be established in the late 1970s, just as the Kangan Report was having the effect of revitalising TAFE and as the Neighbourhood House movement in Victoria gathered force. The 1984 Education Commission Review devoted a special section to ‘the significance of adult education’ noting the rapid growth of centres, funding problems and the shift towards a regional and community-based structure (1984, 24-26).

This rapid growth of CAECs is only partly due to a swelling population in areas such as the NSW North Coast. Centres also sprang up in isolated towns with static populations and limited access to post-school opportunities (for example Bourke, Brewarrina, Eden, Dorrigo, Kyogle and Warialda). Others developed in

towns where there was an existing TAFE college or where new campuses were being opened, such as those in the Orana region, Eurobodalla, Tenterfield, Forster-Tuncurry or the Lake Macquarie area. Many country TAFE colleges were then providing short non-award (Stream 1000) courses in circuit centres in outlying towns. Interestingly, the majority of CAECs are in towns with a TAFE college or are within 20km of one, rather than far from other providers. The notable exception is a group of CAECs in the isolated towns in the North West. Generally, the CAECs emerged alongside expanding TAFE colleges, not as a response to their absence.

In retrospect, it seems that the development of the CAECs movement (and its ideal of ‘grassroots’ action to initiate courses for adults) is part of a greater consciousness of adult education that also witnessed TAFE’s brief adoption of the community college model and the emergence of regional ACE.

With the emergence of a broad VET system, expectations of CAECs have increased and led to closer consideration of their vocational outcomes. The Aulich Report gave extensive treatment to the economic benefits of community-based education (Aulich, 1991, Chapter 5) and *The Vocational Scope of ACE* reported that small centres often have vocational outcomes that are less tangible than employment-related

Table 5.2 CAECs by ACE Region (metropolitan region excluded)

BACE Region	LGAs	CAECs
New England/North West	20	11
North Coast	19	8
Orana	14	1
Central West	17	2
Hunter-Central Coast	15	7
Riverina	30	3
South East	18	5
Far West	2	1

skills but which might include 'hidden' economic benefits such as increased self-sufficiency, improved farm productivity and income enhancement for the unemployed (1993, 53ff).

A number of other considerations have helped to shape the research on the small centres and their role in VET.

- CAECs offer an alternative to the formal VET system, not merely an alternative means of *entry* to this system. It is especially notable that larger proportion of women participate in CAECs than in TAFE colleges.
- To the extent that TAFE has rationalised its services CAECs are being called upon to fulfil a wider range of roles and to complement the services offered by smaller country TAFE colleges.
- Where centres have developed in isolated areas, they provide opportunities that can link people into the TAFE colleges some distance away.
- Enrolments and contact hours in smaller centres can vary markedly from year to year, reflecting their 'community-driven' nature. Their success depends on an active committee and effective co-ordinator.
- The contact hours in CAECs appear to have grown by about 6% since 1989 compared with the average growth of contact hours in country TAFE colleges of 19%. However,

many smaller TAFE colleges have generally not grown as much, if at all, in recent years.⁷

This review of the rural and regional perspective highlights a number of issues which are explored through the case studies of regional colleges and CAECs that follow -

- What role is ACE playing in meeting the VET needs of specific industries in a particular locality or region and the needs of labour force target groups such as the unemployed, Aboriginal people or rural women?
- If it is true that growth of both TAFE and ACE in smaller centres is slower than in large regional centres, what is the role of smaller centres in increasing opportunities for VET? How should these smaller centres be supported by the regions?
- To what extent do ACE providers co-ordinate their activities with TAFE and other providers such as Skillshare to ensure that together they provide a range of opportunities for VET? What strategies for maximising opportunities in a town have been developed?
- To what extent do regional colleges that have taken over the concept of 'community college' operate in this way, and how successful have they been? What kind of vocational outcomes result from their provision?

REGIONAL COLLEGE CASE STUDIES

The Central West Region

The Central West region extends over fourteen local government areas (LGAs) covering some 63,000 square kilometres – an area 400 kms east to west from Lithgow to Lake Cargelligo and 200kms north-south, from Kandos to Cowra. Figure 5.1 shows the local government areas comprising the region and main population centres. (In some cases the LGA and centres have the same name).

The region is economically diverse with manufacturing and service industries and agricultural production. The population is distributed widely and no large centre dominates the region which includes the cities of Bathurst, Orange and Lithgow, a number of substantial centres such as Parkes, Forbes and Cowra, and many smaller towns.

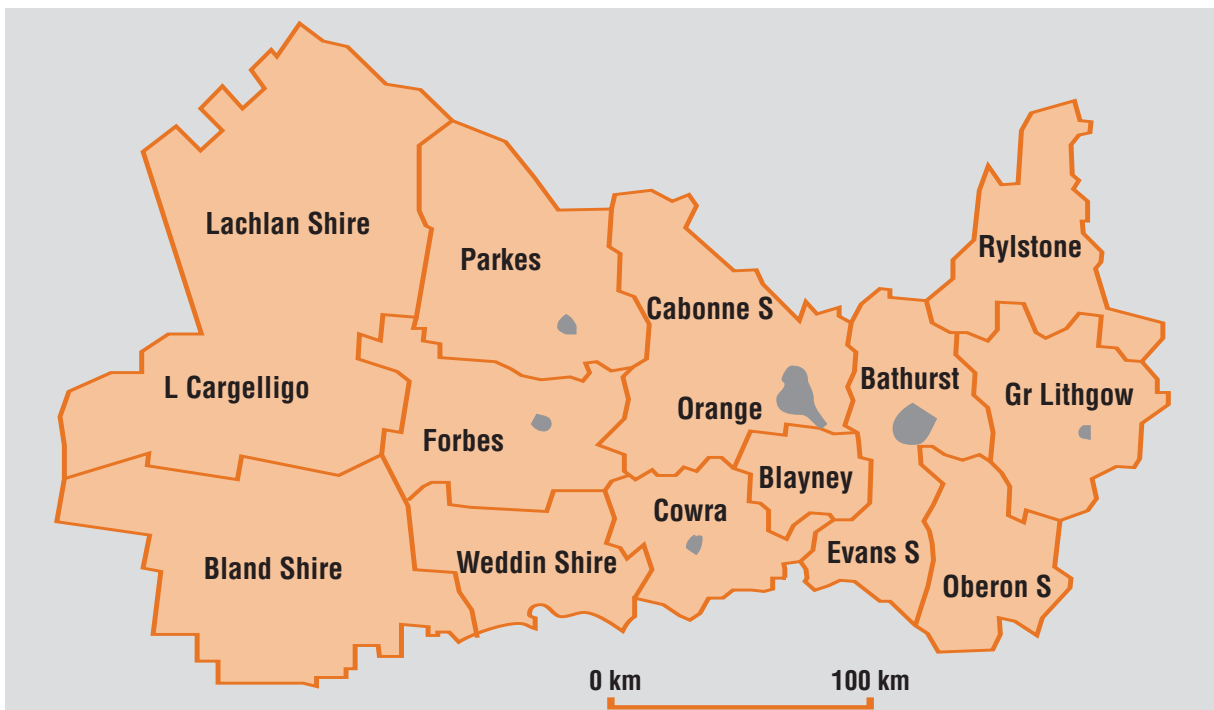
The State Training Profile for 1995 describes the Central West as having a ‘stable workforce and low unemployment’, with expected growth in agriculture, manufacturing and tourism, and sees a ‘better response to emerging industry needs’ and ‘improved rural access to training for Aboriginal people’ as key training needs (BVET, 1995, 75).

Analysis of the 1991 Census data for the main LGAs and selected towns and localities is provided in Tables 5.3 and 5.4, showing selected social indicators and employment by industry. The data is shown for LGAs (shires and cities) and towns and localities (L) to bring out differences within the region.

For example, -

- Bathurst City and its outlying Evans Shire grew by 20% in the ten years to 1991, with small to negligible growth in other centres.
- The proportion of older people aged 55 years or more in some centres in the region

Figure 5.1 Central West Region



exceeds that of the larger centres and NSW as a whole.

- The proportion of people with some form of post-school qualification is generally higher in the largest towns.
- The regional economy is diverse. Lithgow, Portland and Kandos have an industrial profile with larger proportions of people who work in mining or manufacturing. The western LGAs or localities have large numbers of people engaged in agriculture, mining or manufacturing.
- There are also differences in the local labour

markets. Employment reflects the concentration of services in larger centres. Compared to NSW, Bathurst, Orange and Young have almost a fifth of their workforce employed in Community Services. The medium sized towns (Parkes, Cowra, Forbes, Young, for example) have their workforce relatively concentrated in Wholesale and Retail Trade compared with Bathurst and NSW as a whole, reflecting their roles as service centres. Relatively large numbers of people in Molong, Boorowa and Rylstone work in Public Administration.

Table 5.3 Central West region – Selected Social Indicators, 1991 Census

	Pop	Qual	Age 55+	ATS	Prof	ParaPr	Trades	Sales	Labr
NSW	5731906	41.2	20.6	1.1	12.9	6.6	13.5	13.6	12.2
Orange (C)	32915	38.0	19.1	1.9	10.5	7.6	14.3	14.6	16.7
Bathurst (C)	27202	39.5	16.6	1.7	14.0	7.4	13.2	14.4	13.9
Gr Lithgow (C)	19802	39.1	18.3	1.1	18.0	7.7	18.0	10.4	17.6
Parkes	8777	33.5	25.6	2.1	9.1	6.8	14.9	16.7	13.7
Cowra	8416	33.6	24.9	4.1	8.6	5.1	15.2	15.0	19.4
Forbes	7547	33.5	22.8	1.9	9.6	6.3	15.0	15.7	17.2
Young	6667	36.6	25.2	0.8	9.3	6.5	17.4	18.7	14.1
W. Wyalong	3456	31.7	25.4	1.9	9.1	5.3	15.4	15.7	14.2
Blayney	2656	31.5	19.2	1.1	6.3	5.1	17.0	11.6	22.2
Portland	2051	33.1	20.6	0.9	5.8	5.4	20.3	9.8	21.4
Canowindra	1719	33.1	27.3	0.8	7.0	6.8	13.4	13.6	23.8
Molong	1560	32.6	25.6	0.6	7.8	7.8	16.8	10.0	17.2
Kandos	1527	29.7	25.9	1.0	4.2	6.5	21.2	8.7	19.4
L. Cargelligo	1258	29.2	21.7	7.6	8.0	5.1	20.1	12.9	14.0
Boorowa	1091	29.2	27.8	0.4	8.4	4.4	19.6	11.2	18.5
Rylstone (L)	721	29.5	23.0	0.4	6.9	4.6	17.8	12.7	20.8
Eugowra (L)	572	24.8	33.5	1.0	5.1	1.7	16.9	13.5	28.7
Trundle (L)	548	27.5	22.6	1.3	9.9	6.0	13.2	19.2	13.9
Tottenham (L)	386	31.8	26.3	3.1	4.3	8.7	22.5	7.2	22.5
Cudal (L)	382	40.6	23.7	2.1	10.5	11.3	21.8	7.3	17.7
Yeoval (L)	305	32.7	31.3	1.9	11.8	0.0	15.7	17.6	11.8

Key to Indicators: Pop = total persons; Qual = % over 15 holding a post-school qualification; ATSI = % Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander; Age 55+ = % 55 years of age and over. (C) = City LGA, (L) = Locality. Source: CDATA 91 and Supermap, ABS.

Proportion of employed persons employed in –									
	Agric	Mining	Manu	WRT	Trans	FPB	PubA	ComS	RecPS
NSW	3.9	1.0	13.1	18.9	5.0	12.7	5.0	17.0	7.3
Orange (C)	3.9	0.3	15.5	19.3	3.5	7.9	5.0	21.6	7.8
Bathurst (C)	2.6	0.5	14.6	18.8	4.4	8.9	3.8	25.0	6.7
Lithgow (C)	3.5	12.3	12.2	13.6	5.9	5.6	5.2	13.1	6.7
Parkes	4.3	2.1	4.5	22.3	10.4	6.9	7.3	17.0	10.3
Cowra	5.6	0.2	16.5	22.2	4.6	6.9	4.3	18.1	7.4
Forbes	7.1	0.2	10.2	23.4	3.7	6.2	4.2	20.6	8.3
Young	7.6	0.5	7.8	23.7	3.1	8.9	3.3	20.4	7.9
W.Wyalong	7.8	0.7	5.5	25.4	7.6	5.7	4.4	17.8	12.3
Blayney	2.3	2.5	29.2	16.8	4.8	4.8	3.1	14.7	6.0
Portland	0.4	11.8	17.3	11.8	4.5	3.6	4.7	12.0	5.0
Grenfell	12.7	0.0	2.4	22.8	5.7	8.5	7.0	17.9	9.5
Canowindra	7.4	0.6	6.7	20.7	6.5	5.5	2.3	27.0	4.7
Molong	9.4	0.0	9.6	17.3	4.5	4.3	11.8	16.5	6.5
Kandos	1.9	11.6	30.4	13.1	3.2	4.0	5.1	10.8	7.0
L. Cargelligo	21.9	0.0	3.9	20.6	2.2	3.5	3.5	18.9	6.3
Boorowa	23.3	0.0	0.9	16.8	2.6	6.8	10.2	18.2	6.5
Rylstone (L)	4.9	12.3	10.4	17.5	5.6	5.6	12.7	13.8	6.7
Eugowra (L)	19.5	3.2	10.0	18.4	2.1	5.3	1.6	19.5	6.3
Trundle (L)	10.8	0.0	7.4	11.5	4.1	8.8	2.7	25.0	12.8
Tottenham (L)	34.2	0.0	0.0	14.2	1.9	1.9	1.9	21.9	7.7
Cudal (L)	2.3	0.0	17.8	7.0	13.2	2.3	18.6	22.5	7.0
Yeoval (L)	9.8	0.0	0.0	4.9	9.8	4.9	9.8	29.5	11.5

Note: Electricity, Gas and Water; Communications; and Construction omitted. Portland, Trundle and Greater Lithgow have significantly more people than the state working in the first.

Table 5.4 Central West region – Industry of Employment Employed Persons, 1991.

- The proportion of the workforce engaged directly in agriculture is relatively small in most centres. There are significant numbers of people engaged in service and other industries (Table 5.4).

The largest towns have more people holding a post-school qualification, with most towns having fewer professionals and more tradespersons than NSW generally. (Table 5.3 shows selected occupation groups only). Some centres

have significant Aboriginal populations, especially Cowra and Lake Cargelligo. Many towns have relatively more labourers and related workers than NSW and in some areas – Blayney, Canowindra and Eugowra – this is twice the NSW proportion.

Table 5.4 summarises the industry of employment of those persons employed at the 1991 Census. The region is economically diverse. A number of towns have a relatively large

workforce engaged in manufacturing, notably Bathurst, Orange, Cowra, Blayney, Kandos, Portland and Cudal. In 1991 Bathurst City had 53 manufacturing establishments employing nearly 2000 people, Orange, 67 (employing 2300) and Lithgow, 14 establishments employing 1,200 people (Regional Statistics, NSW, 1993). Lithgow, Portland, Kandos and Rylstone have relatively large numbers employed in mining. Employment in the wholesale and retail trade is most marked in the larger service centres. Surprisingly, most centres have proportions of people working in Community Services that are comparable to the State.

In agriculture, the area is highly productive. With eight percent of the State's farm acreage, the region in 1991-92 had under cultivation one third of the State's oats and a fifth of its wheat. It produces one sixth of the State's wool and a tenth of its beef cattle (Regional Statistics, NSW, 1993, 50-51).

Regional economic development has been given a sharper focus through the identification of the Central Economic Zone (CEZ) which includes some 27 local government authorities in the Central West and Orana regions. The Zone highlights the productive capacity of the NSW 'heartland' and promotes the advantages of rural living and its business opportunities.

Central West Community College (CWCC)

The College is often cited as a success story in community-managed ACE. In the early 1980s the College Council recognised that 'to prosper it must restructure its activities in line with competitive business practice'. It assumed that the Board's base grant would not significantly increase in the foreseeable future. It was not expected that the general adult education program would be self-funding since the College had a limited population of some 120,000 adults dispersed over an area of 63,000 square kilometres and 22 centres and outposts. This population is less than half the nominal catchment of Strathfield Regional Evening

College or Sydney Community College. As a rough country-city comparison, the rate receipts of Bathurst City in 1991 (some \$21m) were the same as those of Auburn Council, one of half a dozen small municipalities served by the Strathfield College (Regional Statistics, NSW, 1993). Auburn Municipality had twice the population of Bathurst.

The College has many more enrolments in the general program, but this returns less than 15% of the College revenue. The provision is divided into three types -

- Community Programs – the general adult education program of short courses which respond to community demand. These include many courses known to have vocational outcomes. The College that claims some 7% of the Central West population enrolled in 'community' courses in 1993.
- Literacy and Numeracy Programs. The College has one of the most comprehensive literacy programs of any ACE provider, further details of which are provided below.
- Targeted programs. Most revenue comes from these targeted programs – courses which address government priorities in area such as unemployment, land-care, aged care, disabled services and prisoner education.

CWCC has been successful in meeting the challenge of diversifying its funding and expanding its services beyond the core general program. The Board's base grant comprises some 5% of its total budget. In 1993, no less than 17 different sources funded the services it provided.

The funding 'pie' for 1994 depicted in Figure 5.2 simplifies a complex and changing picture in a number of ways. First, it groups together like programs. The \$0.5m literacy program breaks down into a further eight components including the Special Intervention Programs for Corrective Services (\$107,000) and the Board's literacy funding (\$60,200). Employment services includes a range of services including a Workplace Employment Officer and CTEP Employment for disabled people.

Secondly, the pie graph does not show the quite dramatic changes that can occur from year to year as they did in 1993 – 1994 and

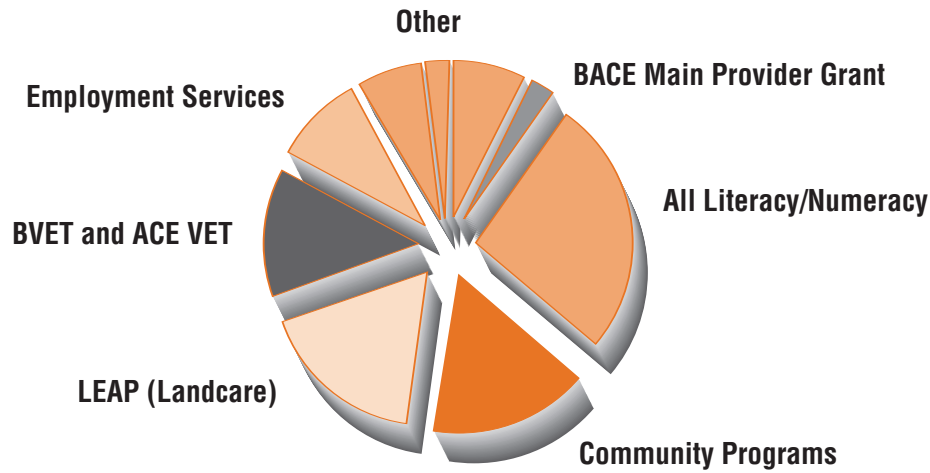


Figure 5.2 Central West Community College Funding, 1994.

again in 1994 – 1995. Thus, the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (\$154,300) ceased at the end of 1993, but the college more than doubled its funding under the Special Intervention Program (SIP) to the same amount for the next year. In addition, there was a major change in profile as the college gained a large amount of BVET funding including \$110, 000 for ACE VET courses, literacy programs and special projects. By 1995, further changes were underway as the College took on a Skillshare (\$147,000), gained a large increase in its LEAP allocation to \$1.32m and an extension of its CTEP employment service. These details underline the point that the College has to be single-minded about ensuring a continuity of its submission-based funding.

Thirdly, the pie graph cannot show the amount of unfunded staff time that is required to maintain this funding profile. The ability of staff to win grants should not obscure the fact that the viability of the College depends on them continuing to do so. The College infrastructure, is indeed, a ‘house of cards’ – albeit one which employs 14 full-time as well as its many part-time tutors. This situation presents a potential problem for the College, which has evolved a conscious management approach to a dynamic situation.

- Development has been program-based. The College has grown by gradually establishing a number of educational services that are funded by different agencies. Each

of these programs is managed in its own right by people selected for their skills in the area. The College appoints a local co-ordinator and does not attempt to manage a program at a distance.

- The philosophy has been one of developing strengths in the College and then enabling smaller, outlying communities to access services where appropriate. The ‘community program’ has served as a means of outreach to smaller towns. This expansion has occurred in a planned way.
- Gaps in services have been established by identifying needs that are sometimes highly specific – such as the need for aged care in Canowindra, high unemployment in towns in the Carpertee Valley, or workplace literacy needs in overlooked towns such as Kandos.

Table 5.5 shows more clearly how the College had developed the pace at which funding diversification has occurred and the marked shifts in profile from year to year as mentioned. The College has increased in size by one third on average every year since 1989. In 1989, the established literacy program was the main source of other funding. The following year saw only a small growth, but in 1991 the College more than doubled its previous budget by expanding quickly into the area of labour market programs. The following year, most of the largest programs (especially the ALLP literacy program) received increased funding.

Table 5.5 Development of Central West Programs 1989 – 1993 (\$'000)

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Main Provider Grant	105.0	105.0	105.0	107.4	116.8	113.8
BACE Literacy	26.0	27.5	30.3	58.5	60.2	60.2
People With Disabilities	15.0	15.0		16.0	16.0	
REAP	14.8					
National Policy on Languages	45.0					
Helping Early Leavers		43.7	105.0	105.0	107.6	107.0
Corrective Services Literacy		5.4	9.9	42.5	37.8	12.5
Non-Government Adult Ed		11.9	42.0			
Jobtrain – Employment Access		20.2	50.0	74.1	30.6	
Special Intervention Program			52.2	77.7	60.7	153.0
Skillshare Literacy			7.5	5.8		
CALP Isolated			36.7			
TAP Work Experience			5.1	5.1		
Nat Resource Manag Strategy			30.0	32.3	71.8	35.7
Literacy Consultancy			1.1	3.3	0.4	5.8
Aust Lang and Literacy Policy			70.6	220.2	154.3	
Workplace Officer				61.5	50.8	58.8
Workplace Literacy Kandos					0.9	1.2
ALLP Isolated					58.5	
Other fee for Service Literacy					9.9	8.9
Landcare (LEAP)					711.8	255.0
Home and Community Care					4.0	13.0
Employment Now (CTEP)					80.8	135.0
Other (e.g. Isolation Programs)	1.3	0.8	5.0			3.6
BVET Co-ordination						70.0
ACE VET Courses						110.0
BVET Literacy						61.1
Accreditation Project						62.0
Regional ACE Special Needs						10.0
Model Project						36.9
Total	207.1	229.5	550.4	817.6	1572.9	1313.5
Total College Income	477.7	537.4	836.9	1345.8	2016.7	2171.3
Growth Year to Year	-	12.5	55.7	60.8	49.9	7.7

Then in 1993 there was a further expansion into new areas notably Landcare Environment Action Program (LEAP), amounting to a further doubling of the College budget. While 1994 has seen a further increase, in 1995 the College's total income will increase a further 50% to \$3.3m.

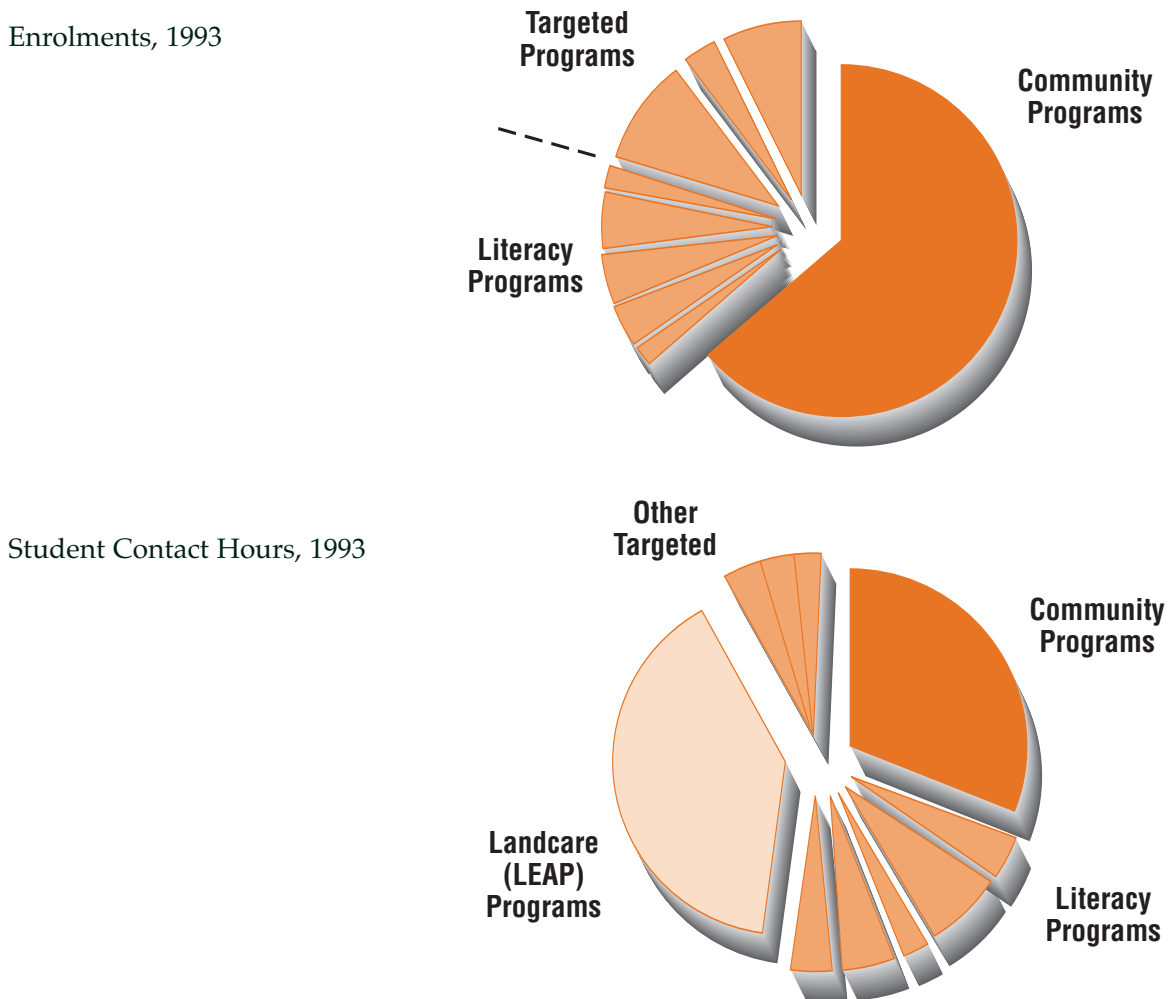
With new programs funded by different agencies, community programs of traditional adult education have become less significant in the overall College profile. Figure 5.3 shows the situation in 1993, which has not changed greatly since then. While Community Programs had over 60% of all enrolments, the Targeted Programs and Literacy and Numeracy Programs were much more inten-

sive in terms of teaching load (Student Contact Hours). These courses have more contact hours per enrolment.

The provision

The College has excelled in developing a wide range of programs with vocational outcomes. The following examples highlight the literacy and targeted programs, even though the 'community programs' will have vocational outcomes for many participants. (A cursory study of financial records showed that a

Figure 5.3 Central West – Enrolments and Student Contact Hours, 1993



minimum of 1% of 1994 community program enrolments were paid for by private businesses including pastoral companies). The College's view that the general program should be used to introduce the College's specialised programs to smaller towns also has to be considered. The aim is to encourage participation in VET via general adult education and overtly 'vocational' programs.

The large Literacy and Numeracy program is now offering many contact hours in many centres and is of special note in considering the CWCC's contribution to VET in the Central West. Staff identify a number of principles underlying the effectiveness of their work, which are also reflected the College's overall approach to VET.

- Strategic literacy provision. The staff see literacy as part of the College's wider response to vocational education and training needs. 'Client focus' means developing a quality program that meets client needs in a specific context, such as worker retraining at the Kandos Cement Works. The literacy staff attempt to 'steer the program' with an awareness of the broad policy environment. Their competitive advantage has been the College's ability to see how literacy can be part of labour market programs and other government policy initiatives. Cost has not been the sole factor in successful tendering. The literacy program, once established, was a basis for developing into other areas such as labour market programs.
- Quality teaching and programs. The College has had a commitment to quality of service. Curriculum writing, teacher appraisal, and career pathways with salary increments are seen as important in developing quality. Professional development has been a high priority, but this has depended on the College's ability to offer stable tutor employment.
- Curriculum development. The College attempts to make sure that short courses are articulated. Courses need to form a sequence since literacy development is long term rather than short term. The College is therefore not simply an 'entry-point' provider of literacy, but aims to ensure continuing opportunities for students.
- Program management. The College philos-

ophy has been to assist staff to gain competence from their experience of working in the organisation and to learn how to deliver better programs or manage program delivery better. The strengths in one area have been extended to others by developing the ability of staff to manage a program. The effective management of literacy and close co-operation of Principal and managers has been a hallmark of the College's approach.

- Pro-active relationship with government agencies. The College developed the view that it should to have a close working relationship with the CES and DEET. It has actively assisted the local office in interpreting and actualising complex guidelines by providing a provider perspective on the curriculum, teaching and assessment issues involved, for example, in the Special Intervention Program (SIP).

In seeking to describe the types of programs offered by the College and the range of vocational outcomes it achieves, it is apparent that this is an issue for providers themselves. Once programs are diversified through success in gaining from a range of sources and target groups, then the College must develop a college structure that can see the relationships between these programs, as a set of complementary services and reflect its regional role and mission. This point – which Central West refers to as developing an 'integrated approach' to the structure of provision – is an important aspect of the development of the community college model in the hands of ACE providers.

The following section highlights some examples of the College's approach to extending VET opportunities in the Central West.

- Disabilities. VET opportunities for people with disabilities are concentrated in Bathurst with plans to extend it to Mudgee in 1995. The College runs the Community Training and Employment Program. The Disability Review Panel assesses the suitability of applicants for open employment and the service attempts to match them to a job, with each person having an on-the-job trainer. More severely disabled people will be taken on in 1995.
- VET in small isolated communities. Expansion of the College has enabled it to

take programs to small centres. For example, the Kandos-Rylstone area is 'on everyone's border' and tends to be neglected. It has specific needs for VET which the College is addressing. The local economy is based on the large cement works which has been restructured and automated. There is high unemployment. The College is running a workplace literacy program which supports the Certificate in Cement Manufacturing Operations offered by TAFE. The College has also set up a general program of courses which runs twice a year and will introduce LEAP in 1995.

- **Contract Training.** In its 1993 Statistical Collection the Board of ACE lists a category of 'Other Course' to include those courses not included in the General Program, Literacy, People with Disabilities or 'fee for service'. This category includes contract training as it was defined in Chapter Three. Central West CC had 126,256 hours in this category, the largest total by far of any provider and almost one quarter of all such hours in the State.
- **Aged Care.** The College sees aged care as one example of local needs that are not necessarily regionally visible. Training for home and community care workers has been developed and offered in some towns that have a high proportion of older people and where the centre is remote from the main service centres. Home and Community Care (HACC) has been offered in Yeoval, Cumnock and Cudal.
- **Employment Services.** The College activities extend beyond courses. Increasingly important in its work are employment services. A workplace employment officer offers counselling and support to assist young people to gain job experience and placement with an employer.

Links with other providers

The College is clearly taking an expanding role in providing VET in the region and it has sought the 'partnerships' foreshadowed in the TAFE-ACE Strategic Plan. Recently, a regional

conference brought TAFE and ACE staff together and a Western Region Working Group has been formed to work on a range of issues. The success of CWCC in winning the right to provide literacy and other programs in open competition with TAFE means that the College is in a position of relative strength. It is an equal, not subordinate, partner with TAFE.

The potential for co-operation can be understood in terms of TAFE's changing role in the region. Table 5.6 shows the typical pattern of a shift from shorter to longer courses, seen in the greater growth of EFTS compared to enrolments. These campuses in the Central West region have 60% of the enrolments of the Western Institute of TAFE. Parkes, Forbes, Lithgow and Mudgee had little or no growth in EFTS (contact hours) over the period, while the larger campuses of Bathurst, Cowra and Orange grew. This does suggest that there is room for CWCC to grow in meeting short course opportunities with declining enrolments in short courses reflected in some of these colleges.

The CWCC has been very active in establishing links with a wide range of agencies in the region as part of its approach to gaining funding for a range of services. These linkages – for example, with the CES, Department of Agriculture, Land Information Service and a number of industries such as Edgell's and Uncle Ben's Pies – have been more significant for its development than educational links as such.

Emerging Issues

From this analysis there are a number of general issues that emerge and which have implications for the role of regional colleges in achieving vocational outcomes. These include:

- **The Community College model and regional ACE**

The CWCC model has shown how successfully an ACE provider can operate along the lines of the 'networked college' of the community college model. The College is large enough to gain resources to build up a service that can

then be extended to smaller, local isolated towns. This model clearly differs from the 'loose federation' of community-managed CAECs serving a region such as the North West of NSW (see Walcha case study below). Two CAECs operate in the region and there is little or no competition between them and the CWCC.

The research highlights that CWCC has developed an effective model for delivery of VET outcomes, judged on the range of target groups served and the effort expended to ensure that outcomes are evaluated and the process reflects the outcomes desired. The advantages of the community college model are therefore its ability to gain additional funding, extend the range of services offered and extend its reach into communities that have little or no provision.

• Resourcing and VET programs

The CWCC has grown because sources of 'diversified funding' were available, and because it has succeeded in operating on the submission-based funding model. This model benefits those ACE providers like the CWCC who can achieve a critical mass from which to participate in competitive funding. This 'critical mass' is the minimal infrastructure needed to carry the load of applying for grants

and administering them, ensuring continuity of funding.

The Aulich Report (1991, 137) pointed to the negative effects of submission-based funding. It is a major achievement of the CWCC that none of these have stood in the way of it expanding its role in vocational education and training. Nevertheless, it is obvious that its VET achievement is built on a tenuous basis. The college 'infrastructure' is not underwritten by recurrent or capital funding of any kind. Ongoing funding, according to the Principal, is 'based on the gamble that applications will continue to be successful – there is little room to generate a surplus against future contingencies'.

Thus for the CWCC, the growth of the VET in the ACE sector has provided an opportunity to grow – but in an entirely contingent way. ACE is the one area of provision where growth is not underwritten by recurrent funding, as it is for Skillshare for example. All the hidden costs of maintaining the provision are costed into each grant, including the professional development of the staff of the College. It is instructive to think of the range of 'infrastructure' that is so funded – the competencies in program design, management and evaluation, to ensure quality and staff development. These are costs of provision and are as crucial to the *quality* of provision as are the costs of facilities, teachers or equipment. Whether the funding agencies

Table 5.6 TAFE enrolments in the Central West

College	Enrol 1993	% change 89-93	EFTS 1993	% change 89-93
Bathurst	2824	11.6	868	25.1
Cowra	1520	3.1	389	13.7
Forbes	1429	19.2	371	-2.4
Lithgow	1858	8.1	469	-5.6
Mudgee	1733	-16.8	456	-14.6
Orange	4685	-7.9	1506	10.9
Parkes	1689	-21.7	375	0.8
All Western Institute	25925	-4.2	7206	7.9

themselves are aware of these issues is another matter.

The College has expanded its role in VET because it could not otherwise expand through the general program. The limits of the 'self-funding' or cost-recovery model quickly brought the College to an impasse. In 1994, it is notable that the expansion into VET underwrites the expansion of the general program into smaller centres in the region, with the idea that other targeted programs may follow later. The College thus illustrates the limits of the cost-recovery model applied to ACE and raises the question of how infrastructure to sustain VET programs is to be provided in the long run. The idea that infrastructure can be funded by clients is to utterly misunderstand the economics of provision.

WEA Central Coast Community College

The Central Coast region comprises the two local government areas of Wyong Shire and Gosford Council. The region runs from Brooklyn in the south to Morisset 60kms further north and has an estimated population of 263,000 people spread evenly throughout 86 towns and villages (see Figure 5.4). In many respects the Central Coast region has metropolitan characteristics and demographics which make it different to other rural ACE regions.

Population growth is a major trend in the Central Coast, with growth rates averaging around 4% per annum for the last five years. In

Figure 5.4 Central Coast – Localities and Providers in Gosford and Wyong LGAs



1988 the region contained 216,200 people. Whereas in the 1960's and 70's the Central Coast was known best as a retirement area, in the 1980's and 1990's the population growth consists mainly of young families, many of whom are from a non-English speaking background.

The 1991 Census revealed that Central Coast residents from a non-English speaking background (NESB) formed only a very small proportion of the population. However, recent council and community group estimates suggest that up to 20% of people who use their services are NESB clients and this could point to a significant population trend that has emerged since the 1991 census.

The region has an economic base of tourism, food processing, power generation, mining and the retirement industry and associated services. Out of a working population of 103,000 people, as many as 40,000 are estimated to commute by road and rail to work in Sydney.

Gosford Municipality is the more affluent of the two Local Government Areas and provides the majority of enrolments to the College general adult education program. In contrast, Wyong Shire has a higher proportion of people on government benefits and provides the majority of the College's government funded labour market and employment programs. Both Wyong and Gosford have a retired population above the State average of 20%, with some areas as high as 36%, compared to an average for the region of 25%.

Unemployment in the region is generally higher than the State average with a range between 11% and 13.2% since 1992. Informal CES estimates have the rate in 1995 at 15%. The State Training Profile links the Central Coast with the Hunter region and describes an economic infrastructure that includes heavy industry, steel production and shipbuilding, but in fact much of the industry in the Central Coast region is related to small business activity. As one would expect with a region undergoing significant growth, Construction (8% in Gosford and 10% in Wyong) employs more people than the State as a whole (6%) with some areas such as MacMasters Beach even higher with 19% of its employed engaged in construction in 1991.

Other significant social and economic characteristics of the region are:

- Both Wyong and Gosford have large proportions of older people compared to the State as whole (28% and 26% compared to 20%) and for some postcodes such as Woy Woy (in Gosford) and The Entrance and Toukley (in Wyong), the proportion is over 33%. This large retiree population has supported several CAECs in the region which began as 'leisure learning' centres.
- In 1991, some 9% of Gosford City residents and 6% of Wyong Shire residents said they had a degree level qualification compared to 12% of NSW. Wyong had relatively fewer people with any qualification compared to Gosford and NSW as a whole.
- Gosford City has more Managers, Professional and Para-professional occupations than Wyong Shire (with high proportions in some beachside areas such as Wagstaff – Killcare), and Wyong more Tradespeoples and 'blue collar' occupations than Gosford and the State generally.
- In 1991 there were relatively more people working in Wholesale and Retail Trade (a fifth of the workforce in each LGA) than in NSW (19%) and in Construction as noted above. Other industries, such as Community Services (17%) employed similar proportions of people in both as NSW.

The College

The College is one of four Workers Education Associations in NSW. In 1988, it changed its name to a Community College to create a distinctive identity for its activities in the region.

Ourimbah is the geographic centre of the Central Coast region, on the boundary between Gosford and Wyong Shires. As such, it has become a strategic location for all post-compulsory educational providers. The College was part of a group that successfully lobbied for the creation of a tertiary education campus based at Ourimbah to service the growing population

in the region. The Ourimbah campus is a multi-purpose development presently in its second phase and by 1996 it will be a major outpost of the University of Newcastle, have expanded TAFE facilities and continue to house the WEA Central Coast Community College.

Due to a chronic lack of space in school buildings throughout the region, the College had to address its administrative accommodation requirements at the end of the 1980's. In 1989 the Director and Committee decided to seize their opportunity to be part of the Ourimbah campus, and erected high quality demountable buildings for its administrative headquarters and five classrooms. Two rooms are designated computer facilities, and contain the latest IBM compatible machines, and a third has high quality cooking facilities. The College estimates that total investment in this infrastructure exceeds \$800,000.

Paying for this infrastructure has been a major focus of the College's budget over the last five years, perhaps at the expense of appropriate staffing levels to support the training activity.

The major advantages of having high quality facilities is that the regional program offered in ten centres can be planned and administered from the Ourimbah headquarters. Perhaps more importantly, the College's computer facilities have been used to establish a profile for the College as a quality training provider in the area. Indeed, the Computer facility remains the most profitable part of the College's Adult Education program, and has served as a bridge into Industry Training.

The College offers four types of training programs. These are -

- General Adult Education and ACE-VET Programs
- Contract Government Training
- Literacy Programs
- Customised Industry Training

In 1994 the College conducted 578 courses for 6,353 students throughout the region which represented 82,627 student contact hours. These courses have become increasingly vocational in emphasis in response to student demand over the past three years. This emphasis has happened in two distinctive

ways – through increased demand for courses which are paid for by the employer of the course participant and by the introduction of the ACE/VET program.

The Director estimates that 30% of the College's enrolments in computer courses are paid for by the employer of participants, that is, 570 enrolments annually each year for by 90 companies. This is a high level of participation by local employers for the size of the College when compared to the data for other Sydney metropolitan community colleges reported in the industry perspective in Chapter Four.

Despite the strength and financial viability of the computer courses, the Adult Education program cannot break even and is, in practice, subsidised by the other training activities of the College.

In 1994 the College offered 10 Jobtrain programs and one Special Intervention Program. These programs are designed to address the employment needs of Jobseekers by providing specific vocational training, and to address barriers to employment such as low literacy and numeracy skills.

The training ranged from computer awareness, to medical receptionist skills and a community welfare worker course. Significantly the College worked directly with industry to develop courses for Food Process Workers, and Nursing Home/Hostel Workers, which ensured 100% employment of participants at the end of the course. This compares with average employment and training outcomes of 70% for the other Jobtrain courses. In 1995 the College hopes to become involved in the New Work Opportunities Program, which will significantly boost Government Contract income.

In addition to the SIP course offered above the College conducted 51 literacy courses for 383 students in 1994. The College has a regional literacy program which uses BACE and BVET funds to offer daytime and evening provision in seven centres. The Literacy Co-ordinator has also worked with the Shire Councils and local business to offer fee-for-service workplace literacy programs which are further discussed below as Industry Training.

In 1994 the College conducted 36 courses for 15 local companies and the Shire Councils. The

College employs a Business Training Co-ordinator who works with the Literacy Co-ordinator to design and implement workplace programs that range from computer training, to report writing and supervision skills.

The College anticipates that its industry training activity will increase dramatically over the next three years, as the College increases the database of companies who might wish to use their training, and they are able to offer programs attracting participants from more than one company. In short the College sees the need to track its industry clients and create a large enough clientele to make viable courses which bring together participants from several enterprises.

The College has developed an innovative approach to customised training. Jobtrain funding is used to encourage the larger employers to recruit new staff by using the DEET-funded College training program as a selection and induction process.

This approach matches the employment needs of local industry with DEET-funded training for unemployed job seekers. The Business Training Co-ordinator targets industries where staff turnover is high and, as part of a training needs analysis, offers to address recruitment issues through the use of DEET-funded programs such as Jobtrain and New Work Opportunities.

Under these programs the College acts as a training broker as well as a provider, and manages all aspects of liaison with DEET, while the company or companies have a pool of 12 trained potential employees at the end of the 10 week training program. This model has been used for the Health Services sector, Aged Care sector and for companies involved in manufacturing and food processing. In several cases, the outcome has been a 100% employment of participants after the course.

The success of this model seems to be based on the following factors:

- The jobs already exist for successful course graduates to take up.
- The service is part of a range of training options that the College can provide to

employers, and this particular service is free.

- This training option is often contemplated by employers only after the College has established its credibility with the company through the provision of other training.
- The College guarantees to undertake the bureaucratic work associated with organising the training and takes responsibility for funding, program development and implementation, while the CES provides the trainees.

The provision

The General Program comprised 88% of enrolments (6353) in 1994. There were 147 (2%) enrolments in Contract Training, 383 (5.1%) in Literacy and a further 354 (4.9%) in Industry Training. The teaching effort involved is shown in terms of student contact hours (SCH) in Figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5 also shows proportion of income derived from different funding sources including grants for programs. The General Program earned \$587,000 or 60%, Contract Training some \$211,000 (22%), Literacy, \$93,000 (10%) and Industry Training \$75,000 (8%). The average cost per enrolment was \$92 in the General program, Govt \$1,435 in Contract training, \$242 for literacy and Industry Training, \$211.

In terms of overall vocational effort Government Contracts provide only 2% of the College's enrolments but significantly provide 29% of the College's Student Contact Hours. Industry Training provided only 3% of Student Contact Hours but 8% of total funding.

In 1995 the College recognises that the Jobtrain and SIP training markets have become more crowded and competitive, and they have seen their market share in tendered Labour Market Programs diminish as Sydney-based providers are able to undercut their tendering prices usually by offering lower wages to training staff.

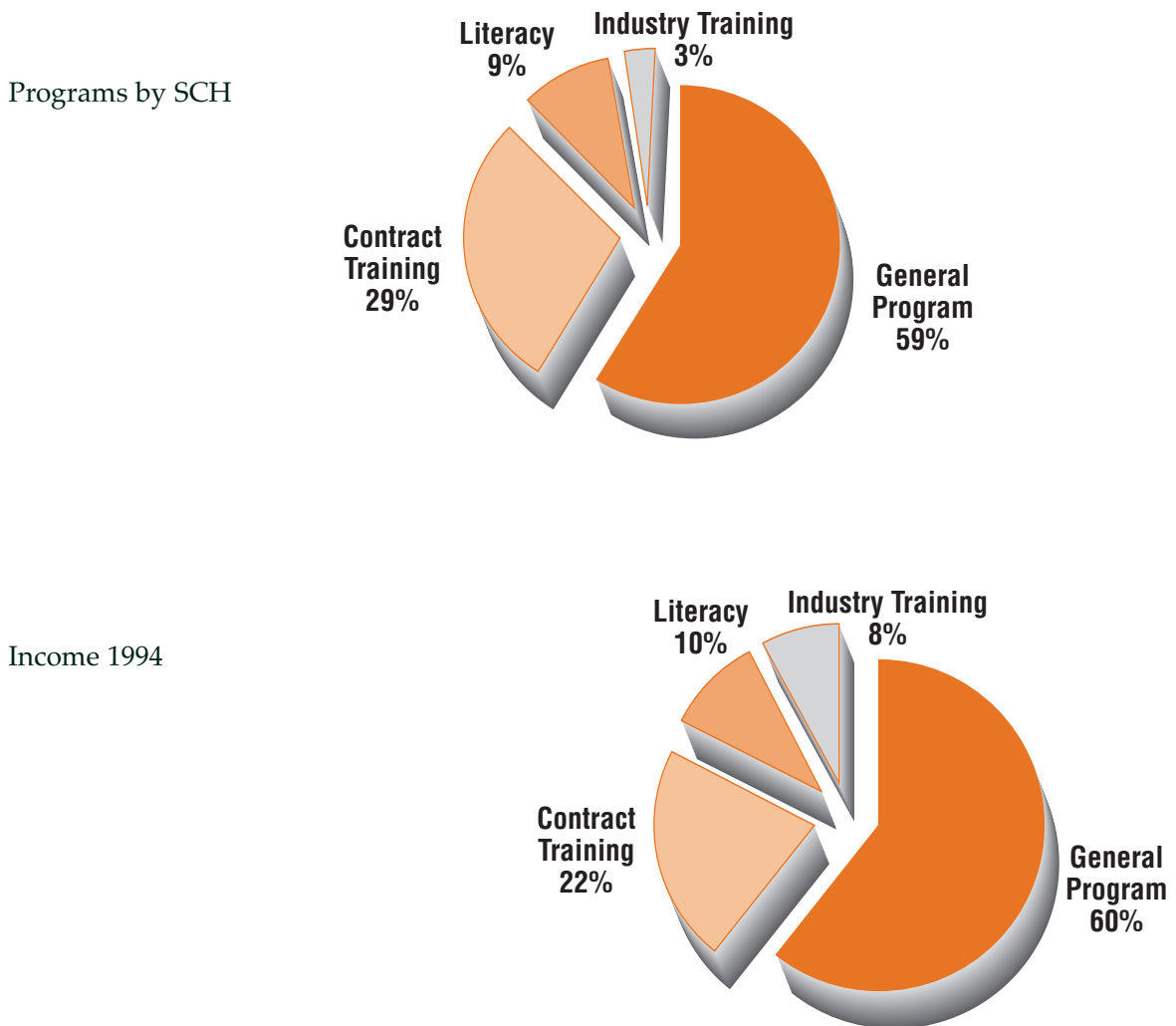


Figure 5.5 WEA Central Coast Community College Programs

This has prompted the College to organise more directly funded industry training, and where appropriate develop Jobtrain proposals with industry which are then funded directly by DEET, an innovation already described above. In some cases this training can avoid the tendering process.

The Adult Education program has developed an increasingly vocational profile in direct response to customer demand. In 1995 the College is employing four faculty specialists to assist the Assistant Director to develop the regional program.

An increasingly large proportion of College courses are offered at weekends to cater for the demand of students who commute to Sydney to work and who are therefore reluctant to attend classes on weekday evenings.

The College has followed up its contact with local employers who have used the general program for their training, and increased provision in the key demand areas of computer training and personal development. It is marketing training courses directly to the employer clientele concerned, as part of industry servicing activities. In this way, the

College anticipates the strategic targeting of local employers discussed in Chapter Four.

High levels of unemployment on the Central Coast provide both opportunities and constraints for the Adult Education program. On the one hand the College finds it relatively easy to employ well-qualified and experienced training staff from the ranks of unemployed people with professional and para-professional skills. On the other hand, the self funding training market is limited by the comparative lack of disposable income of potential students who receive government benefits.

High levels of unemployment also create a range of new training opportunities through increased Commonwealth funding for Labour Market Programs such as the Landcare and Environment Action Program (LEAP) and the New Work Opportunities Program (NWO).

Consistent with the apparent movement of people from a non-English speaking background into the region the College has experienced increased NESB enrolments in its Adult Education program, and last year offered the Certificate of Spoken and Written English in four centres throughout the region.

In contrast to anecdotes about the effects of the drought on rural ACE provision, the Central Coast Community College experiences increased enrolments during fine weather while rainy periods often lead to a major downturn in enrolments.

Vocational Outcomes

The College has a strong industry focus with all four training areas servicing the training needs of local employers in one way or another. One of the College's competitive advantages is that it is customer focused by nature and therefore able to responsively design training programs to meet specific company needs.

The College assesses its vocational outcomes in terms of successful courses conducted, positive student feedback and repeat business. An important index of its success in achieving outcomes is growth in the number of employers it services each year. The College

recognises that there is some development needed to better monitor vocational outcomes across the programs it offers.

DEET requires the College to monitor the employment and training outcomes of its Jobtrain courses at course end, and then after four and six weeks. DEET uses its own post program monitoring at one month and three months to determine long term outcomes, and uses this information in the tendering process.

Employment and training outcomes in DEET programs average 70% with some courses such as those in the Community Services industry performing better than others. Courses such as 'grounds maintenance' appear to perform poorly. Outcomes in literacy programs are determined by the willingness of participants to continue training and their ability to meet negotiated vocational and personal goals.

Industry Training programs can be offered in an accredited or non-accredited form. Usually they are the latter, and employers have not been too concerned with certificated outcomes as long as it is clear that work performance in the particular area has improved. A course conducted for NRMA employees did use accredited curriculum, and assessments determined which employees would progress to the next level of the course.

It is clear that the majority of the employer clients, the College differentiate between the evident quality of the training – judged in terms of the usefulness of the course at work – and the need for formal recognition of the course.

It is also clear from the College's involvement in the ACE-VET program that it has the ability to offer accredited training outcomes through a range of its Adult Education and Language and Literacy programs. There is scope within the College's Adult Education program to track students progression through various College programs, and articulation into programs conducted by other providers. The language and literacy programs could also track student articulation into further training and employment.

One of the major challenges reported by staff was the increased administrative demands placed on them, at a time when they wished to concentrate their effort into meeting industry

training needs. The College also has a strong focus on monitoring the quality of all of its programs. Senior staff are rostered on to monitor programs in the evenings and at weekends, to seek informal student feedback on site.

The College has a casual trainer salary range to attract the best teachers and tutors, and it monitors their performance with regular telephone surveys of course graduates to gauge their satisfaction. If students are unsatisfied with their course their enrolment fee is refunded or discounted, or they are offered a free place in another course of their choice. The College views customer satisfaction with the outcomes of the course as an essential part of its business operations.

Links with other providers

The growth of the area has been reflected in TAFE participation (Table 5.7). Student contact hours at Gosford Campus grew by a third from 1261 to 1694 over the five years from 1989 to 1993. At Wyong campus, they increased by 58% from 950 to 1506 in the same period. Enrolments as such grew less rapidly, by 16% at Gosford and 32% at Wyong. Ourimbah campus took its first enrolments in 1993.

As the Ourimbah campus develops, the College anticipates that it will have more formal articulation pathways with TAFE.

Present arrangements between the College and TAFE would seem to support this position. In 1995 the College is conducting 'Computers – A First Course' under licence from TAFE. This 54 hour course will be used by graduates to meet the entry requirements of more advanced computer courses that TAFE plans to conduct in the second semester.

This arrangement resolves a continuing difficulty for TAFE where participants enrolled in their advanced courses would have a wide range of skills. It also provides a pathway for students who wish to secure a place in the advanced course.

The TAFE-ACE relationship in the Central Coast is best characterised as a common sense and communicative one. The two organisations do compete in the Jobtrain market, but are aware of each others' strengths in particular areas. The sharing of facilities on the Ourimbah campus might also serve as a model for others throughout the State.

The College has also developed resource and facility sharing arrangements with the university that should benefit the students of both organisations. While the College does not own the land on which its offices and classrooms have been built, its buildings have been written into the master plan for the site.

The College has a working relationship with the two SkillShares that operate in the region, and the Director is on the board of one of them.

The Central Coast region also includes four Community Adult Education Centres (CAECs) which are funded as Main Providers by BACE

Table 5.7 TAFE enrolments on the Central Coast 1989 - 1993

College	Enrol 1993	% change 89 - 93	EFTS 1993	% change 89 - 93
Gosford	4635	15.6	1694	34.3
Wyong	4637	31.8	1506	58.5
Ourimbah	136	–	47	–
Hunter Institute of TAFE	46,166	5.4	16,183	21.3

Year	1991	1992	1993
Tuggerah Lakes Community Leisure Learning	13,859	13,044	12,470
WEA Central Coast Community College	85,910	118,765	114,243
Kincumber Quality of Life	12,256	8,835	9,873
Lake Munmorah	1,276	2,249	3,215
Wyong Leisure Learning	6,781	2,572	6,472

Table 5.8 ACE on the Central Coast – Contact Hours 1991 - 1993

(Table 5.8). These appear to be active in redefining their roles in the area, with at least one (Berkeley Vale) taking a new name that reflects a stronger orientation to ACE.

Present links with these providers are not as healthy as they once were, due to a whole-hearted move by some centres into accredited provision funded under the ACE-VET program. The College feels there may be duplication of provision, though it is possible that high demand exists for these courses. The small centres are perhaps also reflecting the shift away from a largely retired population. Lake Munmorah Leisure Learning Centre (the smallest CAEC in 1993) is offering most of the available accredited courses in 1994. Wyong and Tuggerah Lakes have similar offerings. All three, for example, are offering one or more modules of the Certificate in Receptionist and Office Practices.⁸

While ACE providers in other non metropolitan regions can have a designated geographical area (such as a town or city) once isolated centres in the Central Coast region are merging into an urban whole. This has made geographical divisions more difficult and in the past the ACE providers have offered different types of provision in the same area. With the advent of ACE-VET funding the boundaries have been blurred further, with ACE providers offering the same course in the same area at different prices, a source of some conflict between the providers. If this is the case, there would appear to be clear benefits from some form of planning for regional collaboration amongst providers.

The College has very little contact with other private providers of Labour Market Programs who do not maintain an infrastructure in the region.

Emerging Issues

Measuring vocational outcomes at the WEA Central Coast Community College is a complex task. The College contributes significantly to the vocational training effort in the region, with a diversified program of training courses that individuals and industry can access in a number of ways.

The College is well placed to respond to the needs of small and medium sized business which comprise the economic base of the Central Coast. The College is clearly beginning to do this by building on its innovative approach to designing industry specific training, by incorporating vocationally-based courses in its general program and expanding its accredited provision through the ACE-VET program and other funding opportunities (BVET Private Provider, SkillTrain). A key element will continue to be its program of Language and Literacy courses targeting industry and individual needs.

The College has built its professional reputation on the quality of courses in the Adult

Education program, particularly the computer courses, which they aim to deliver to a high standard, and which are now the only part of the Adult Education program that consistently pays for itself. Thus, the College has been pressed to diversify its funding as a means to cross-subsidise other courses. The College Director anticipates a modest growth in the Adult Education program over the next three years, but predicts that the College's Industry Training program will double within three years.

The College has proven its ability to conduct a wide range of vocationally-relevant courses which are financially viable. However, there remains an assumption that the general adult education program will continue to make an overall loss.

Like Central West, Central Coast must face the facts which affect the overall profitability of the general program such as a population that is relatively small and geographically dispersed. By rural regional College standards Central Coast Community College has a relatively large and geographically less dispersed population. However, it is constrained by the fact that the median household income in Wyong is \$21,200 compared with a state average of \$31,312, while that of Gosford is \$27,308. This can be compared with the high income levels in some of the LGA served by metropolitan colleges such as Mosman (\$46,883) and Leichhardt (\$35,568).

The business environment for the Adult Education program is likely to remain a bleak one for the foreseeable future, except for the high demand area of computing. The College believes that its future lies with meeting the needs of industry since other funding sources cannot be guaranteed in the long term. It is prepared to continue to compete for government funded programs in the medium term to support its present viability.

The College has a strong future in the provision of vocational training for a range of reasons. Firstly, because their students demand it, secondly because vocational training is financially viable, and finally because it represents a natural progression from the College's previous training activities and will ensure the diverse funding base it needs to survive.

Conclusions from the Regional College Studies

The regional colleges studied were selected because of the way they have adventurously sailed forth into the uncharted waters of diversified funding and in the process expanded their programs and the range of vocational outcomes achieved by various target groups. Four significant issues emerge from the studies.

1 Why some regional colleges have diversified their funding

Both colleges were faced with a situation where their general adult education programs were running at a loss and were unsustainable. The College management recognised that diversification would be necessary. It is clear that several factors control the overall profitability of the general program in ACE. These are -

- Whether there is a large enough population to support a broad general program and how far this population is dispersed. The catchments of both Colleges are significantly smaller (especially in the case of CWCC) than those of Sydney colleges and a much lower population density. Residents are not concentrated in a few suburbs or LGAs.
- Whether the college must service multiple centres. No program can hope to run at a profit where it must service a large number of far-flung centres which require administrative support and meet the cost of teaching venues and office space. These costs drive up fees and have to be recovered from the limited population.
- Whether the regional population has a sufficient disposable income that can be applied to course fees. The large metropolitan providers not only have larger populations but they are often based in LGAs where the median household income (MHI) is higher than the State as a whole (NSW, \$30,312 in 1991) for example, Sydney Community College (Leichhardt MHI in 1991, \$35,568), Eastern Suburbs REC (Randwick, MHI \$33,609) or Manly-Warringah Community College (Warringah MHI, \$41,683). By contrast, the MHI of Bathurst City was

\$29,336, Gosford, \$27,308 and Wyong, \$21,200. Obviously, more detailed analysis is necessary, but there are limits to how far the 'user pays' principle will go in resourcing adult community education.

2 The community college model for regional ACE

It was noted that ACE has a potentially larger role in providing for local and regional needs as TAFE looked beyond the 'community college' model. The two Colleges have in a remarkable way developed many of the features of that model – central administrative support for multiple campuses, a multi-purpose program-based curriculum, open-door entry, and close relationships with labour market agencies. This has helped them take a larger role in providing vocational education and training opportunities. In short, the diversification of funding base has led them to develop diversity of programs. Literacy and other government-targeted programs have been the basis for expansion, and to do this they have developed an emphasis on quality of educational service.

3 Significant impact through a range of vocational outcomes

Because these colleges have a large and diversified program, they can claim a significant impact in terms of vocational outcomes – across entry level basic vocational training, labour market programs, literacy and customised industry training. Their provision is regional and focuses on the delivery of programs through a networking of services. The organisation is large enough to achieve economies of scale both in delivering programs to several centres and in supporting program quality by creating conditions that retain good staff and provide professional development. In short, these regional community colleges have a critical mass that allows them to make a contribution to VET and to plan strategically to expand that role.

4 An integrated approach

Finally, the size and diversity of these providers suggests they are performing a range of training roles. Without a large enough organisation, they would argue, it is difficult for an

ACE provider to meet the demand for expanded opportunities for VET with a range of programs. Diversification of funding has widened the vocational scope of these colleges, but at the same time they have attempted to achieve an integration of the training roles they are performing. The multiple sources of their funding with a tendency to fragmentation of services is managed by integrating them – by structuring the organisation in terms of programs and services and managing these as parts of a whole.

Case Studies of Small Centres

The aim of the small centre case studies was to explore how Community Adult Education Centres contribute to vocational education and training. Because they have relatively few courses, the outcomes they achieve are overlooked. The *Vocational Scope of ACE* found that small centres reported a range of vocational outcomes from business and computing courses, arts, crafts and health courses. These included such economic benefits to participants as income supplementation, increased self-sufficiency and small business activity (McIntyre et al, 1993, 54).

The small centre case studies therefore refer to the smaller 40 of the Board of ACE's 75 Main Providers. The centres were chosen on several criteria: the need to represent a range of communities in different regions (coastal urban, remote rural, regional centre); and whether the centre provided a range of courses and aimed to meet a range of needs for VET. No CAEC came from a region which was also the subject of a regional college case study.

The research first profiled the local government areas in which the 40 CAECs were located, using some twenty indicators selected from the 1991 Census. The indicators that describe some of the main features of a locality and take the form of percentages, for example, the proportion of people aged 55 and over in the total population, or the proportion in managerial or professional occupations.⁹

Regional, ACE and TAFE statistics were used in developing the case studies. The researchers visited five centres for interviews with co-ordinators, committee members, other educational agencies and community organisations. The researchers wrote drafts of the case studies which were returned to participants for their comments and included in the final material reported here.¹⁰ The studies were structured by a number of key questions about the role of CAECs in achieving vocational outcomes.

These concerned –

- The history and development of the centre, its philosophy and current priorities.
- How those associated with each centre saw the area and its vocational education and training needs and whether there were particular groups whose needs were catered for.
- The kind of courses provided and what special courses might have been run, including accredited ACE-VET courses or labour market programs and literacy.
- What other providers exist in the town or locality such as TAFE or Skillshare, how the centre fitted in to the overall provision of VET, and what links with other providers had been established such as articulated courses.
- What links there were with other community organisations or business including the Chamber of Commerce, or government agencies such as the CES.
- What special initiatives the centre has taken, especially in the VET area and what vocational outcomes resulted from courses.
- What problems or issues had arisen for the centre in providing VET that need to be mentioned for example, which may be limiting their ability to provide ACE in the way they would like?

The five case studies which follow reflect the diverse localities served by CAECs. Kiama Adult Education Association is virtually a suburban CAEC in the orbit of greater Wollongong. Bellingen Adult Education is in many ways typical of the high-growth coastal CAECs. Griffith Adult Learning Association is located in a rich agricultural area which is relatively well-serviced by government. Monaro Continuing Education Group (Cooma)

and Walcha Adult Learning Association are more remote, with the latter severely affected by rural recession. Bellingen has no local TAFE College and Walcha is the only provider of post-school courses in the town.

Kiama Adult Learning Association

Behind the impressive neo-classical facade of the old Council Chambers, the Kiama Adult Education Association shares an office with the Regional Adult Education Officer and Council's Community Services section. The location is strategic. The centre has been successful in positioning itself to provide both a general program and a range of courses designed to meet specific vocational education and training needs.

Kiama Municipality lies between Shoalhaven Shire to the south and Greater Wollongong to the north. Its population (15,909 in 1991) grew by nearly 40% in the decade from 1981, a growth comparable to other NSW coastal areas gaining retirees from the main cities. The town of Kiama is a blend of old seaside holiday town and new dormitory suburb. Kiama is becoming 'engulfed in Greater Wollongong' according to the co-ordinator.

Like other places on the NSW coast, the LGA is a retirement area, (see map). In the beach towns of Gerringong and Gerroa, people aged over 55 make up a third of the residents. There is a 'certain insularity' and the co-ordinator reports difficulty in getting courses going and 'promotion is a waste of time'. The newer areas such as Kiama Downs and Gainsborough Heights have seen a wave of double-income households buying second-homes on big mortgages. Rural Jamberoo is a wealthier pocket with a high proportion of professionals and para-professionals. There are older, conservative elements linked to the first farming families in the business community. The district has a large number of teachers, a ready

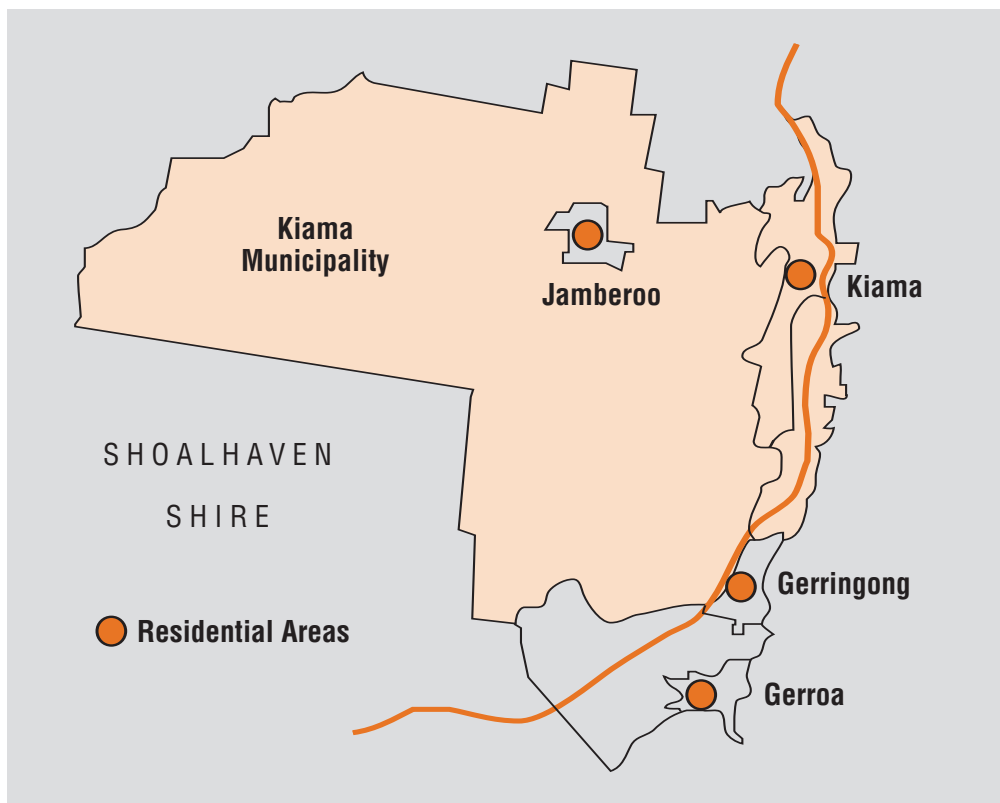


Figure 5.6 Kiama Municipality

supply of tutors and a pool of active citizens enrolling in courses.

In other ways, Kiama Municipality is socio-economically middle-class —

- It has fewer migrants than nearby Wollongong with its history of post-war migrants moving to work in the heavy industries (14% overseas born compared to 25% in NSW and 28% in Wollongong City). It is predominantly an Anglo-Australian area with only 3% of residents speaking a language other than English at home, compared to 17% for NSW as a whole.
- Residents have higher education levels than NSW as a whole. Nearly one third have a degree, diploma or skilled vocational qualification, compared to 23% for NSW and 23% for Wollongong.
- Labour force participation is average for NSW, with relatively more people who

work in federal, state or local government (about 27% compared to 21.4% for NSW).

- The workforce residing in Kiama includes a relatively high proportion of professionals (about 19% compared to 13% in NSW), comparable para-professionals and tradespersons, and notably fewer people working as clerks, salespersons, labourers and operatives than Wollongong City or NSW in general.
- Nearly a quarter of its residents were employed in the fast-growing community services industry group (24.3% compared to 17% in NSW and 18% in Wollongong). Marginally more people work in manufacturing and construction than in NSW, with other industries less well represented in the workforce.
- The median household income in the 1991 Census was comparable to that of NSW as a whole and higher than that of Wollongong.

Unemployment is highest among young people and those over 40s who were made redundant when the steelworks scaled down its workforce. Comparisons of middle class Kiama with other 'poorer' LGAs like Shellharbour are felt to be unfair when Kiama is judged as less needy. The co-ordinator points to the extent of hidden unemployment, and she has identified as an area for action qualified married women who wanted to re-enter the workforce but who assume they cannot register with the CES. Kiama also has particular concentrations of certain occupational groups, for example, textile artists.

The centre and its provision

The picture of provision in the last five years is of a general program stable at some 800 enrolments, catering for some 5-10% of the population of the town (Table 5.9).¹¹ However, the co-ordinator believes the centre has moved into a new stage of development. It has run computer courses since 1989, targeted vocational courses since 1990 and literacy courses since 1991. Since 1992 it has serviced certain groups with specific needs through programs such as JobTrain.

Kiama AEA has played an important part of the diversification of VET opportunities in the municipality. Its work in literacy and special needs pre-dates the arrival of Kiama Skillshare. Kiama AEA has been able to locate training gaps within a range of provision.

Several areas stand out –

- Accredited courses. The centre has run or will be running accredited courses in Medical Terminology, Keyboarding, Bar-Waiting and Introductory Hospitality Service. It opted to participate in the VET program because the centre was already conducting vocational courses which fitted the State Training Profile.
- Literacy. The centre is among the fourteen (14) small providers that ran literacy courses in 1993-4. It is an assessor and provider of the Special Intervention Program (SIP) for Kiama. It works with TAFE to refer people to basic education courses. The co-ordinator is a member of a regional Literacy Taskforce on which TAFE, ACE, AMES and local churches are represented.
- Workforce re-entry is a major focus of the centre. It has run a course called 'Re-entering the Workforce with Confidence' funded by the BACE Special Needs program, and has been funded by BVET to run a drop-in centre including a focus on literacy. Typing and hospitality were later added. The co-ordinator has identified as a priority qualified women who wanted to re-enter the workforce. These women may not fit the guidelines on disadvantaged people for DEET courses.
- Textiles. The centre also piloted a Jobtrain course on 'Textiles for Small Business' that was originally aimed at more highly trained women. CES guidelines were restrictive and many participants lacked basic skills (could not order in a restaurant or had not been to adjacent towns). There were 'dramatic'

Table 5.9 Growth of Kiama Adult Learning Association, 1989 - 1993

Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Courses	58	73	66	72	85
Enrolments	805	866	793	821	797
Student Contact Hours	10739	10940	8464	10453	11165

College	Enrol 1993	% change 89 - 93	EFTS 1993	% change 89 - 93
Dapto	1351	-29.7	403	-30.0
Shellharbour	3443	20.3	1059	32.5
Wollongong	12,722	3.6	4548	14.4
Wollongong West	2679	79.9	985	66.4

Table 5.10 TAFE enrolments in the Wollongong area¹²

gains for the participants in confidence and personal changes, beyond DEET's expectation of 'immediate' post-course employment. For example, some participants entered TAFE courses up to 18 months later.

- **Small business.** The Chamber of Commerce seems conservative, and the co-ordinator has found running small business courses difficult. Students dropped out when it came to sharing business plans and ideas, and only the most successful businesses stayed on the course. Employers sometimes have very specific needs, for example the restaurant that enrolled staff in floral art so they could learn table decoration. Schools have paid for staff to train when they installed new computers, especially since the syllabus in Technics requires 20% computing and key-boarding skills.
- **Hospitality.** Young adults have enrolled in hospitality courses, such as the accredited Bar-Waiting course, after TAFE enrolments have closed. The centre is meeting a short-term need quickly.
- **Arts and Business.** The centre liaised with the Council's Community Arts Officer to highlight the activities of local textile artists in 'Fabric of Life'. The 'Textiles for Small Business' course targetted needs for training in marketing of arts and crafts.

Links with Other Providers.

Kiama AEA is among the smallest of a range of VET providers in the region. Kiama residents have access to the WEA Illawarra and some prefer to travel there for the wider range of courses. There is good networking with other ACE providers such as the large Southern Adult Education Centres based in Nowra and the centre has the advantage of sharing office accommodation with the Regional Office. The centre has a strong committee chaired by the local Federal MP.

There is a policy of co-operation with the Skillshare and TAFE. The Co-ordinator liaises closely with the CES, though changes of management have been frequent, making continuity difficult. Much depends on personal relationships. The Kiama Literacy Action Group 'fell apart' after a new person undermined efforts at co-operation. The centre's office in the Council Chambers makes it readily identifiable as a community service, associates it with other community services and provides inter-agency contacts.

The centre is less than 50 km by rail or road from the Illawarra WEA, and the Wollongong campuses of the Institute of TAFE, and no more than 15 km from Shellharbour TAFE. This College saw its equivalent fulltime students (EFTS) grow by 32% from 1989 - 1993 while enrolments grew by only 20% in the same

period (Table 5.10). In the same period, the Kiama AEA student contact hours grew by only 4%, suggesting that Kiama was already meeting some of the demand for short courses in the area.

Despite this apparent growth, the co-ordinator believes that TAFE has a declining presence in Kiama, leaving some gaps that appear difficult to fill. Though a new horticulture section has opened at Yallah, Dressmaking and Art are said to be 'virtually finished'. The effect of closing ceramics at Dapto TAFE is said to mean the loss of a high-quality kiln in the area from Kiama to Wollongong, and the same situation exists with loss of other facilities in Fashion and Catering.

Issues

The centre suggests some important clues to the kind of role small centres are taking in providing VET in a locality.

- Diversification of VET. Kiama has defined its role as providing specific needs within a total provision in the area and to this end liaises closely with the CES, Skillshare and TAFE. This has included literacy and workforce re-entry.
- Focused provision of VET. The success of Kiama in achieving status of an SIP assessor and provider, a BVET funding for a workplace re-entry 'drop-in centre' and its accredited programs shows that established small providers can take a meaningful role in direct vocational provision. A centre such as Kiama is not limited to entry level training as a feeder for other providers.
- Operation as a 'small business'. The centre is at a mature stage of development where the infrastructure (office systems, knowledge of tax, insurance, health and safety and sources of grants) has been developed over a decade. The centre has to carefully consider its revenue base, given a small local population relatively close to WEA Illawarra and Shoalhaven Community College, as well as TAFE. These are factors influencing its capacity to provide VET.
- Grants-based funding of VET. There are

factors working against the capacity of CAECs to engage more fully in VET. These include: the small administrative grant (Skillshare's is ten times that of KAEC) and the workload in applying for and administering non-BACE grants. There is the 'opportunity cost' of a lesser Board grant if enrolments in the general program fall, even though more people are accessing the centre and creating additional administrative work.

Bellingen Adult Education Centre

Bellingen Shire (1991 population 11,651) lies between the coast and the Great Dividing Range, 550 kms north of Sydney and 37 kms south of the regional centre of Coffs Harbour. The town of Bellingen was until comparatively recently a typical small rural service centre for the surrounding rich dairy and timber country. But during the 1980s the area became a magnet for 'new settlers', city people who were attracted to Bellingen by its natural beauty and a promised more tranquil lifestyle. Between 1981 and 1991 the population of the Shire increased by nearly a third. Bellingen town now has galleries and coffee shops, some of them housed in restored 'heritage' buildings, and has been described as an 'art and craft town'. To the west of Bellingen town the country rises steeply to the Dorrigo Plateau, a more traditional primary producing area of beef and grain farms, forest plantations and national parks. To the east of Bellingen the coastal town of Urunga, a long time popular holiday spot, is increasingly becoming a dormitory suburb of Coffs Harbour.

Bellingen is an area of high unemployment, low incomes and low educational levels. The 1991 unemployment rate was 14%, one of the highest in the State. At just under \$20,000, median household income is two-thirds the State average. Sixty per cent of the Shire's population have no educational qualifications. Particular concern is expressed in the community about lack of employment opportunities for, and lack of motivation among, young adults.

The Centre and its provision

Bellingen Shire is serviced by two main community-based adult education providers, both based in Bellingen town: the Bellingen Adult Education Centre, which is discussed below, and the Bellingen Shire Enterprise Support Team (BEST). The latter consists of a well-resourced Skillshare providing general skills training and job placements for the long-term unemployed, and a separately located centre called 'Workplace' which provides employment counselling and placement for people under twenty-five. There are also a number of private providers of adult education in the Bellingen area, offering courses in Gestalt psychology, counselling skills, learning skills, neuro-linguistic programming, massage, folk art and decoupage.

Bellingen Learning Group was established in 1982. It was incorporated in 1988 and changed its name to Bellingen Adult Education Centre (BAEC) in 1990. In the local Community Directory, the centre is described as 'a non-profit community-based organisation offering short skills courses at a reasonable fee'. In 1993 the Bellingen Adult Education Centre offered 57 courses to 500 students. Student course hours (SCH) for 1993 were just over a third less than the 1987 figure. As Table 5.11 shows, the centre has a history of course hours rapidly expanding and contracting. So 1989 student course hours were less than half of those for 1987, and the 1991, almost double the 1989 figure.

These fluctuations seem to be the result of a mixture of factors, some of them unexpected. The closure of part of the local gym, which was offering up to six BAEC aerobic classes contributed to a drop in hours in 1988. The doubling of SCH in 1990 to over 10,000 is attributed to sudden interest in Tai Chi, Yoga and Aerobics classes. In later years this demand declined in part due to practitioners moving away or taking students privately. The decline from 1991 is also attributed to the recession, and is similar to that experienced by many other centres.

Currently the centre offers around 24 courses a term. Of those six or seven will not run because of lack of demand. Courses need a minimum of six students to be viable on a cost-recovery basis. The centre receives a grant from the NSW Board of Adult and Community Education but raises three-quarters of its income through course fees. It provides courses cheaply: most cost students about \$3.75 an hour.

BAEC 1994 courses can be divided into four categories, according to the College brochure: art and craft, self-improvement, liberal and vocational. Art and craft courses included: silversmithing, marbling, decoupage, folk art, calligraphy, picture framing, knit-sewing, watercolour painting, sewing, woodwork, stained glass and pottery. Self-improvement courses included: make-up, blues harmonica, didgeridoo, wine appreciation, self defence, fat reduction, Meniere improvement, juggling, chess, abseiling, dog obedience, singing, permaculture, seed propagation, bonsai, drawing and cooking. Liberal education

Table 5.11 Growth of Bellingen AEC, 1989 - 1993

Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Enrol	443	453	420	365	500
SCH	4620	10063	8533	6137	6867
Courses	40	45	41	49	57

courses included: Australian sign language, attracting media attention, parent education, social ecology, HIV Aids awareness, conflict resolution, American Indian philosophy, understanding anorexia, management committees, creative writing, and an Aboriginal reconciliation study circle.

Apart from the St John's Ambulance first aid course, which it has been offering for some years, the centre has not offered specifically vocational courses until recently. Starting in August 1994 the centre conducted an accredited home-based childcare course involving 100 hours of classroom instruction and 100 hours of field work. Twelve students enrolled in this course. In 1994 BAEC also offered an accredited word processing course in conjunction with Skillshare, a 15 hour farm chemical users' course, a computing course, three small engine maintenance courses, and a one-day stock dog training course with thirty participants, run on the nearby Dorrigo Plateau. Additionally, as will be explained below, other categories of courses frequently have vocational outcomes.

Bellingen Skillshare offers computer, office skills, horticulture, bar and cellar, cottage industry, home carers and eco-tourism courses. Skillshare also offers an 'action plan' course aimed at helping unemployed people to 'set personal goals for training and employment'. Workplace generally refers young adults to Skillshare and BAEC courses, but in 1994 it sponsored a Landcare and Environment Action Program (LEAP) project, which is restoring an island in the Belliger River and providing employment and horticulture education for young people.

BAEC and Bellingen Skillshare co-operate in providing computer courses. Until recently there appears to have been no contact between BAEC and the nearest TAFE College in Coffs Harbour.

Vocational outcomes

The Bellingen case demonstrates the complexity of the connection between community-based adult education and economic

outcomes. As has been frequently pointed out (see Chapter 2, above), it is often difficult to separate vocational and non-vocational outcomes in ACE. In Bellingen this difficulty is particularly apparent. Courses that are generally thought of as non-vocational often have employment, income-generation or income-substitution outcomes. Graduates of the massage courses offered at BAEC earn money through working at home, at the market and by offering 'mobile massages' in offices in Coffs Harbour. A woman who attended a knit-sewing course purchased a sewing machine and, working from home, produced children's clothes which she sells in the local market. Another woman had run a general store with her husband outside Bellingen for many years. After selling the shop, she enrolled in a calligraphy course and now makes all her own cards and stationery. She is currently doing a computer course with the aim of getting part-time employment in the local area. A third woman who has a young baby did a jewellery making course and then a stained glass course and plans to make stained glass products at home once her child goes to school.

In Bellingen there may be greater potential to develop links between adult education and income generation and income substitution than between adult education and salaried employment. There are few employment opportunities in Bellingen. There is a small lighting factory in the local industrial estate and there are some timber mills in the district. There are also some job opportunities in Coffs Harbour, and it is hoped that these will increase as a campus is developed for Southern Cross University. But these opportunities come nowhere near meeting the local demand for employment.

In Bellingen it seems more viable to encourage the development of self employment in the crafts and in service industries. The proportion of self-employed people in Bellingen Shire is double the State average. While many of these people are farmers, there are also substantial numbers of people earning income through art, craft, tourism (eg homestays, ecologically sensitive touring), and alternative therapies.

There are numerous outlets in Bellingen and elsewhere on the north coast for art and craft products. Bellingen itself has three substantial

retail outlets for arts and crafts as well as a market with 250 individual stalls every third Saturday. According to the BAEC coordinator there is a definite link between course-taking and self-employment in the arts and crafts: 'You do a course and then you get a stall at the local markets and then it seems to grow from there.'

There is also some scope in Bellinghen for self-employment in office skills. It is notable that the bulk of the local Skillshare course offerings are in the personal computer area.

Other issues

• Community-based VET as preparation for further education

As noted earlier in this report, practitioners and researchers have long argued that general or liberal adult education is often a necessary precursor to more directly vocational education, giving many adult learners the self-confidence and study skills they will need in further education. The Bellinghen data suggest that community-based vocational education may fulfil these preparatory functions as effectively as general adult education courses. The coordinator of BAEC described how the students in the home-based child care course were initially 'terrified of being back in the class environment again'. Each of the six modules carried an assessment and on the first night of the course 'the biggest fear was the exam'. Yet within a couple of months the learners had gained confidence. They had successfully completed assessments and had gained 'official recognition' for their existing expertise in child care, as well as gaining new knowledge and skills. This outcome was, in the coordinator's estimation, in part due to the course 'still being taught very much in an adult education way' with, for example, experience-based forms of instruction and students working collaboratively on their learning projects.

• Need for education about the training reform agenda

The resistance of some adult education centre coordinators and management committees to the training reform agenda is a well known phenomenon. This resistance is often portrayed as reactionary and/or utopian. The Bellinghen research suggests that the resistance is more rationally based. As one respondent put it, 'I think people feel out of their depth. There has been no formal training for any of the coordinators [on the north coast] and many of the management committees are feeling the strain of the increase in responsibilities. It's caused a fair bit of conflict this year...' The accountability and reporting requirements were seen as a time-consuming burden, particularly by management committees which had previously been 'definitely happier, being left to manage instead of filling out a lot of paperwork'. The respondent was looking forward to an up-coming workshop which would pilot management training modules for the ACE sector. But she was also concerned that federally-funded workshops on competency-based training were only being held in capital cities, with no provision for assistance to enable rural ACE personnel to attend.

• Lack of resources

The lack of in-service education for ACE staff and management committees is an instance of a wider problem – the gross under-resourcing of the sector. The effects of this under-resourcing are seen most graphically in the small centres. The Bellinghen coordinator is employed for 20 hours a week, at \$8 dollars an hour funded from the BACE grant. She estimates that she also does 15-20 hours unpaid work each week. In 1995, with an increase in this grant, the coordinator is paid \$12 an hour for 28 hours, still a low rate of pay. The Bellinghen coordinator, and again this is typical of the smaller centres, does all her own clerical and financial work. She personally opens every course, collects the fees and sometimes performs janitorial functions like locking up classrooms. The coordinator was not complaining about any of this; she was simply offering a description of her work. She saw such working conditions as part of the job. As she put it, 'Everyone who's involved in

community adult education is in it because they have a passion for it’.

Under the training reform agenda, ACE coordinators are expected to compete for resources in the VET ‘marketplace’. It is glaringly obvious that they will be unable to do so unless they are paid a living wage and receive adequate training.

• **The need for further research**

In Bellingen, as in many other community adult education centres, courses are often initiated by someone with the skill and the desire to teach something rather than in response to expressed demand or clearly established need. If the goal is to integrate ACE into a national education and training strategy, resources will have to be devoted to comprehensively researching educational need and demand at the community level.

Griffith Adult Learning Association

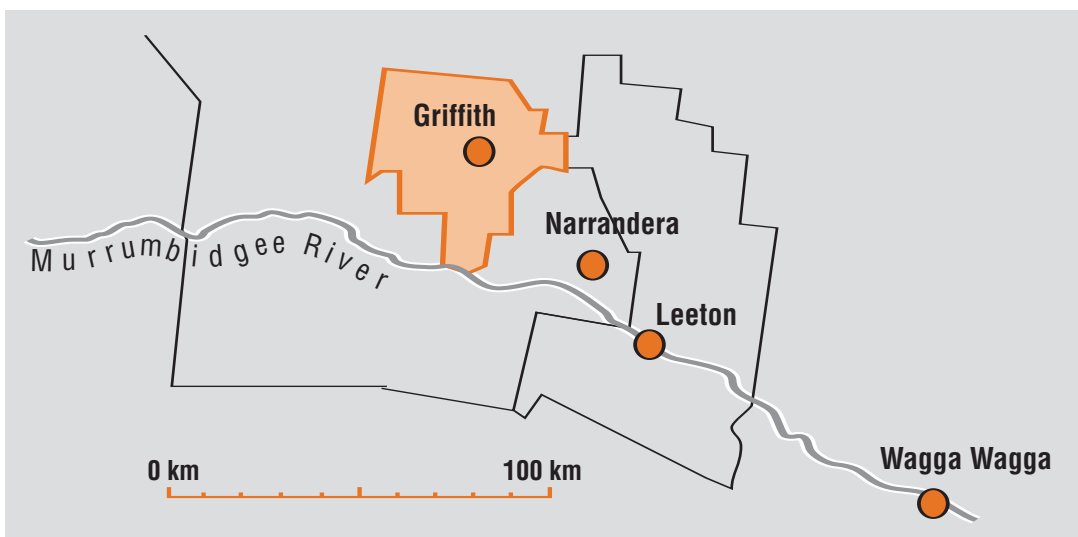
Griffith Adult Learning Association (GALA) grew from a study centre established during the 1970s by the Riverina College of Advanced

Education in Wagga Wagga. The College established a campus in Griffith, 150km away, called the Griffith Study Centre, with the aim of offering university degrees including a BA in Liberal Studies to mature-age students through distance education.

Falling student numbers, due to poor administration and unrealistic expectations, saw the CAE offering more adult education courses, encouraged by funding from the Board of Adult Education (BAE). In 1980 the Riverina CAE ceased operations in Griffith, and later a public meeting established the Griffith Adult Learning Association (GALA) as an autonomous community adult education centre, supported by the Griffith City Council with cheap accommodation and funding from the BAE. Anne Gribble was the first coordinator and GALA grew rapidly. By 1988 it had incorporated and was offering some fifty courses to over five hundred students per year, and thereafter soon reached 1,000 enrolments annually. However, the City Council withdrew the original accommodation and after several years in ‘dark, back-rooms’, a rapid turnover of coordinators and plummeting enrolments, the Association found a home in a small band hall in the main street, one block from the Griffith TAFE campus.

Griffith is described as a wealthy, industrious and cosmopolitan city. It is well-served by different levels of government. Nearly two-

Figure 5.7 Griffith City and surrounding LGAs



Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Courses	40	38	38	148	150
Enrolments	494	304	793	1494	1550
Contact Hours	4182	8952	10534	19369	21000

Table 5.12 Growth of Griffith Adult Learning Association 1989 - 1993

thirds of its residents are of Italian descent. Griffith is the largest centre compared to others in the adjacent Shires of Narrandera (pop. 7,140), Leeton (10,777) and Murrumbidgee (2,230). The City (pop. 20, 530 in 1991) is the heart of the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. Wet and dry farming produces rice, wine, vegetables, fruit, wheat, beef and wool. In the 1991-1992 season over 700 farms produced one-fifth of the gross value of agricultural commodities from the fourteen LGAs in the Murrumbidgee region (Regional Statistics, New South Wales, 1993).

Provision

The first coordinator, employed three-days a week on the Board's administrative grant, was an effective administrator who stabilised GALA and ran it very efficiently. At the same time, she was active in the CAECs Association, later becoming its President. She thought that CAECs should identify their role as one providing a wide range of adult education to ensure that they did not become 'the CWA of the crafts and cottage industries movement'. As a result, GALA 'has found its niche' and values its independence as a community-based provider not subject to the CES and DEET.

The centre offers a selection of special courses targeting the special needs of people in the area. Over the period 1989-1993, the student contact hours of GALA grew by nearly half over the five years to 1993 (1993 figures

approximate). Thus, there has been a steady development from year to year as the centre has expanded (Table 5.12).

Currently about forty courses are offered each semester, with about half of them in the arts and crafts sub-field, and a quarter in the health field. Wine appreciation is offered at beginners and advanced levels.

Intensive agriculture based on irrigation makes agricultural extension important in the district. A range of agencies is very active in meeting the vocational needs of farmers. The Department of Agriculture, CSIRO and Water Resources have committed technical officers. TAFE has courses such as Agricultural Blasting (originally set up by GALA), the use of Farm Chemicals and Farm Studies. GALA defines its role as providing other opportunities and considers that it should avoid competing with computing courses in Skillshare or fashion courses in TAFE and so on.

GALA has taken a number of initiatives in recent years leading to vocational outcomes for its participants.

These include –

- Accredited VET courses. Griffith was one of the numerous CAECs which decided to provide the ACE-VET courses including the Certificate in Calligraphy (2 modules), Signed English and Medical Technology. The last was developed by Riverina Community College and is offered by ACE providers across the state.
- Language and Literacy. The coordinator from 1992 to 1994 came to the centre as the

partner of a rice farmer and an experienced journalist with skills used in the promotion of ACE in the City. She broadened GALA's target group to increase literacy provision, negotiating with the Regional Literacy Co-ordinator to run a Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) program at Bartters Enterprises Pty Ltd. Bartters, one of the State's largest poultry businesses, has a large processing plant in Griffith and employs more people than any other firm in Griffith. There are 17 languages spoken in one section of the plant and Bartters aims to establish an Open Learning English Support Centre.

Community Literacy Programs include three ESL courses designed to suit individual needs and abilities in literacy, numeracy and writing. Current students include a class of Chinese Tiananmen refugees who moved to Griffith for the employment opportunities including Bartters shift work. The multi-cultural composition of the City suggests that language (ESL) and languages should be a priority of the centre.

GALA has gained some places under the Special Intervention Program (SIP), and is developing a course 'Getting Your Licence' for long-term unemployed Aboriginal people and people of NES background. There are also plans to open a learning centre in conjunction with the City Library.

- Rural Women. The centre has consistently supported courses designed for rural women. In 1989 GALA gained a Rural Women's Access Grant for a six month program which involved more than twenty women in classroom and practical sessions on 'Farm Administration and Management'. This course led to a booklet which is still being reprinted and distributed.

A 1993 program, aiming to involve women from 6 centres within a 100km radius was less successful, owing to the drought and the fuel costs involved in travelling to Griffith. This has underlined the need for people to initiate a small local program as an outpost of Griffith to minimise costs for isolated participants. It also illustrates, in the words of the Association president, 'the rural conservative chauvinistic attitude

which sees "women's classes" as less important than a trip to town for farm requisites'.

- Environmental Education. The EPA of NSW supported the development of an environmental awareness course but it was not successful despite strong promotion.

It appears that target groups (farmers and others in the agricultural sector) are more likely to respond to such courses offered through TAFE or the Department of Agriculture, such as the 'Rice-Check' groups which meet regularly on rice-farms with the local agronomist. Lack of success can be explained by gender-based misconceptions about the kind of courses GALA offers and by low levels of formal education in the farming sector and the Italo-Australian community. As is the case in other CAECs, men make up less than 25% of enrolments and appear to be hard to attract to GALA courses.

- Languages. GALA runs Italian courses regularly, since it is an important language of commerce and social life in Griffith (Japanese is also offered). However, many people speak a southern Italian dialect which makes standard Italian as taught in classes less than practical. GALA applied for VET funding to run an accredited 'Introduction to Italian' course that would lead on to a more advanced course in the TAFE College as the time taken to learn a language, makes a short course less effective without some continuity.
- Other Initiatives. The centre has been innovative in trying a range of new courses. It has organised a series of groups for disabled people. It has offered a broadcasting course and has attempted to work with local Aboriginal organisations through the community radio station (2MIA-FM). The local Council has been approached about landscape gardening courses with CES participants.

Links With Other Providers

A local Griffith Education group (Griff-Ed) was set up to promote liaison between TAFE,

College	Enrol 1993	% change 83 - 89	EFTS 1993	% change 89 - 93
Griffith	1763	-12.2	463	-10.4
Leeton	1132	-2.4	256	-0.4
Narrandera	430	-23.6	142	3.6
Riverina Institute	18706	-0.9	5424	10.7

Table 5.13 TAFE enrolments in Griffith and adjacent Riverina Colleges

Skillshare, community health, schools, CWA, the Department of Agriculture, craft shops and the media.

In the past, TAFE and GALA competed for the short course market and this has left a legacy of some guardedness between the institutions. The GALA committee feels that it has clarified its directions for the centre, for example, by targeting rural women's needs, and there is little likelihood of a return to competition between the providers; indeed, there may be needs that neither is meeting. The conditions for closer cooperation with TAFE have improved. The need for better venues and facilities is an issue for this CAEC since it operates in modest accommodation in the former Griffith Band Hall, courtesy of the Trustees.

The coordinator described a recent visit to the TAFE College at the invitation of the Principal, to explore the possible use of their rooms. She was shown over the College but apparently few, if any, were suitable for the use of GALA. More recently, the new Principal had asked to share information with GALA about their part-time teachers and courses in areas such as dressmaking which it once offered in large numbers as Stream 1000 courses, so some dialogue between providers is occurring.

As Table 5.13 shows, enrolments in nearby TAFE Colleges have declined in the five years to 1993. Griffith, like some other smaller TAFE campuses has declined both in enrolments and overall contact hours (EFTS) though the largest colleges (Albury and Wagga Wagga, not shown) grew. Without exaggerating the signifi-

cance of these figures, they suggest that there is a need for closer cooperation between TAFE and ACE to ensure that there is a complementary and expanding overall of VET in the area.

Issues

• Regional Colleges and CAECs.

The Riverina region has 3 CAECs including Balranald Community Arts and Crafts (a small centre with only 1000 annual contact hours), Albury-Wodonga (a very large CAEC partly funded by Victoria) and Griffith. The dominant provider is the Riverina Community College which operates in numerous towns from its base in Wagga Wagga. The regional college has found it difficult to make the general program in these centres a financial success and has had to close several of its outposts. However, the success of the accredited course 'Statement in Medical Terminology' – developed by the regional college and offered throughout the Riverina – underlines the value of collaboration between this college and the CAECs. Few smaller providers would have had the resources to do this kind of development on their own.

• Vocational outcomes.

GALA has a history of pursuing initiatives to meet specific educational needs, such as those of rural women, as well as the traditional

program based on arts, crafts and health courses. Through its literacy and accredited courses, it has widened the range of vocational outcomes it achieves. The Regional Council has been an important support to this expanded activity – notably in the literacy and special needs area, and it helps to assure the quality of service through regional support. It is said that the autonomous local CAEC can maximise participation in the area. Thus Griffith has begun to promote ‘village courses’ where a few courses are piloted in outlying centres such as Darlington Point (20km) and Coleambally.

GALA believes that the vocational emphasis could relegate general adult education to the status of a poor cousin, when ‘leisure and enrichment’ ought to be regarded as a valid part of the adult learning experience. In the context of a rural recession, GALA sees participation in adult learning as having a vital role in mitigating some of the worst effects of the rural crisis, including domestic conflict and suicide.

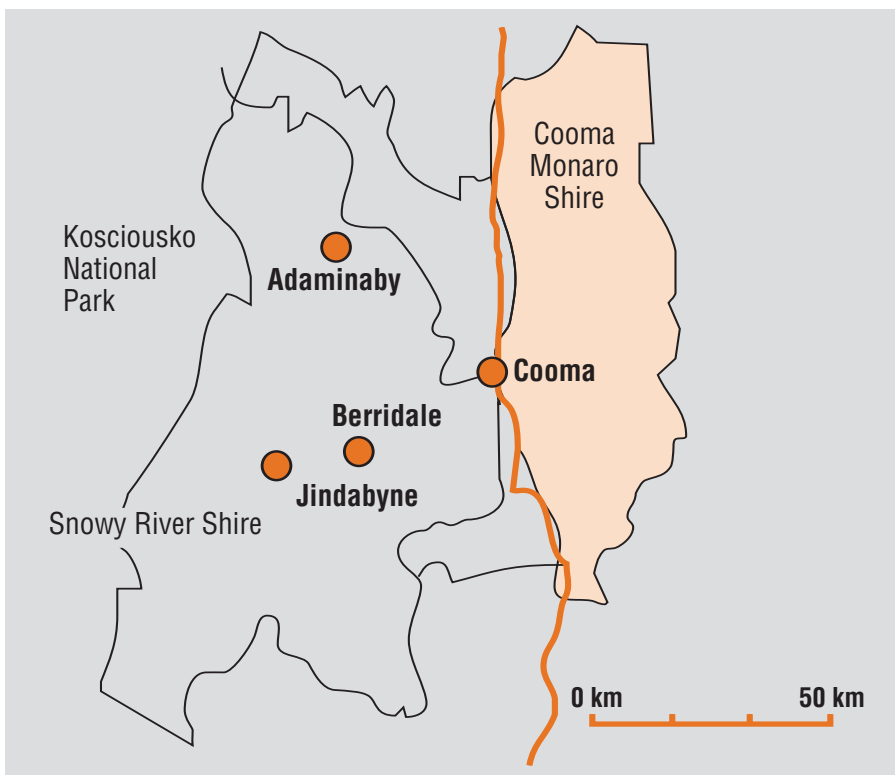
GALA’s strength has been to develop short courses which offer specific competencies to

give local people an ability to access other courses and participate in an increasingly diversified local labour market. It illustrates very clearly the role that small providers can play in extending local opportunities for VET in an area, achieving a vocational impact out of proportion to their size.

Monaro Continuing Education Group, Cooma (MCEG)

The Monaro Continuing Education Group (MCEG) is located in Cooma on the boundary of Cooma-Monaro and Snowy River Shires (Figure 5.8). Some 100km to the north is the ACT and to the west, the high country of the Kosciusko National Park forms a westward barrier to the shires of Tumut and

Figure 5.8 Cooma and District



Tumbarumba. Cooma itself is the intersection of several highways. However, this far south-east corner of the state is remote and residents often feel they are overlooked by government.

The Snowy Mountains Scheme dominates the recent history of the area, and the Authority remains an important employer. Cooma continues to celebrate the fact that it was 'the birthplace of multiculturalism' though, by 1991, it had fewer overseas born (17%) and more second generation residents (65%) than NSW as a whole (25% and 55% respectively). Cooma is the main service centre for the Monaro district, and the town has branches of at least twelve government agencies, including the CES, TAFE and Skillshare.

The shire population grew only slightly (1.6%) in the decade to the 1991 Census. Three-quarters of usual residents in 1991 lived in the town of Cooma (population 7381), but Cooma is also the geographic centre of a larger Monaro area of some 18,000 usual residents. Snowy River Shire includes the small settlements of Berridale, Jindabyne and Adaminaby. Transport and other infrastructure (such as a bus service from Cooma to Jindabyne) is poorly developed.

Other features of the area are –

- **Education:** The shire is comparable to NSW in persons holding some post-school qualification and the age of leaving school. Some 13% have a degree or diploma (NSW, 13%) though there are relatively more people with a skilled vocational qualification (13% compared to 10% in NSW).
- **Employment:** Two-thirds (66%) of the population aged over 15 are in the workforce. Nearly 30% are in government jobs of some kind (NSW, 21%) and more people are self-employed than in NSW, reflecting farm employment.
- **Industry:** In 1991 Cooma-Monaro had a high (18%) proportion of people working in community services, reflecting its character as a service centre. In Snowy River Shire, the growth of alpine tourism is reflected in the large proportion of the workforce (37%) in recreational and personal services, compared to only 8.5% for Cooma-Monaro Shire. In Snowy River Shire, some 12% are in

agriculture. The Monaro is known for its fine merino wool production.

- **Occupation:** Consistent with its character as the service centre for a rural area, there are larger proportions of managers mainly on farms (16% of workforce). Otherwise the occupational profile of the Shire deviates little from NSW as a whole.

Cooma often has severe weather in winter, when it becomes the gateway to the snow fields. Though the main ski resorts are not in the Shire, Cooma benefits from a spill-over effect and there is a large transient population in towns such as Jindabyne. Seasonal employment brings casual workers to the snowfields, and in summer, unemployment is higher in the district. Seasonal employment affects participation in adult education and training. As the TAFE principal expressed it, 'From about April or May on, anyone who can carry a tray is up on the snowfields'. Severe winter weather can discourage attendance at classes.

The ski-industry (based on the nearby snowfields) is currently more a significant employer than local tourism, and there are attempts to 'market the summer', promoting walks, lakes and fishing through a joint effort of the Cooma and Snowy River Councils and National Parks and Wild Life Service. The 'AusHost' scheme, where farm families host overseas visitors, is about to start in the area. The ski-season also creates a need for other services. High seasonal employment is said to create a demand for child care services in the winter months. Cooma also has several hostels for aged care and Skillshare has set up courses training people in this area. Thus the area has a need for training in service-based industries extending beyond hospitality training.

The Centre and its provision

The centre started in 1980, grew rapidly and was recognised by the Board of Adult Education as a CAEC in 1981. Monaro values its independence and 'held out' against pressures to include it as a part of the Southern Regional Evening College in the mid-eighties. The President states that 'everything in Cooma

Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Enrol	365	448	274	400	397
SCH	3079	4145	2973	4312	3641
Courses	28	37	25	37	40

Table 5.14 Growth of Monaro CEG, 1989 - 1993

is run from the Illawarra' though Canberra (100km away) is a 'natural reference point'. The committee feels that its main role is to provide for a wide range of adult interests and it is not developing further into training courses at present. Like other small providers, it has tended to shorten courses to keep them affordable and try new formats such as one day workshops.

The MCEG is not a large CAEC and ranks 59th by size among the Board's 75 main providers. It is the smallest of the five CAECs in the research. Monaro CEG offered some 50 classes in 1993, 40 of which had sufficient numbers to run. Courses were offered in all major fields of the ACE profile – over 12 in arts and humanities, 7 in woodworking and other building areas, 7 in health courses, 6 in land and marine resources (mainly gardening and conservation) and 4 in the business field, including computing. The MCEG did not run courses in the hospitality area. There were some 400 enrolments, 300 of which were women. Older people are more likely to attend classes in the active senior citizens complex. The centre has grown slowly in the five years to 1993 as Table 5.14 shows.

The former coordinator (a teacher in the high school) remains the President of the Association and reports that the mobile population ensures a good supply of tutors from 'interesting people' moving into the area, though there was a certain instability introduced by seasonal employment. The high school link is strong. It contributes office space, some of the venues and some tutors, especially in the computing area. The former co-ordinator felt that the arts and crafts is expanding, perhaps due to increasing awareness of

tourism. Otherwise the area is 'conservative', and limits what can be offered successfully as fee-paying courses.

The MCEG has been successful in meeting a number of vocational needs -

- Business courses. The rural recession has created a need for courses in business and financial management. 'Money Management for Women' was initially funded by a Rural Women's Grant; it has now run four times and been extended to men. In 1993, it was offered free-of-charge with funding provided under the Special Needs program of the Board. The area of business courses is growing rapidly and the centre is unable to meet the demand. Many people are doing computing courses for work reasons.
- There is growing demand across the age range for arts and crafts courses. The MCEG has managed to attract good tutors from the Crafts Council of NSW through its proximity to Canberra. The centre feels it has a greater responsibility in this area since the TAFE college has reduced its arts and design courses. It is possible that the art and design block at the TAFE college might become available to ACE.
- The MCEG has made a conscious effort to increase the number of males participating in courses. In a country town, this is judged to be partly a matter of finding courses that appeal to men such as celestial navigation, upholstery, woodwork and drystone walls.

Links with Other Providers

The Committee has a clear view that 'quality of life' and interest courses are their niche, and takes the view that accredited vocational courses are not a priority. Its role is to 'lead up' to TAFE and complement its courses. It does not seek to compete with Skillshare. Seven years ago there was a clash with TAFE over a 'chain saw maintenance' course. Now, TAFE is no longer able to offer such courses. In future there may be a more active relationship between the providers, since the new coordinator and the Regional Adult Education Officer (a former TAFE regional director with excellent contacts in the Commission) are in the process of meeting with TAFE to discuss closer co-operation.

The area has factors which militate against a high rate of participation in VET, the seasonal labour market being important. According to the TAFE Principal, isolated rural people want short, intensive modular courses that can build up to an award, and there are difficulties in getting people to continue in longer running courses, since enrolments and attendance tend to fall off in winter. The demand for trades has been declining, while Tourism and Hospitality is strategically important in this area. Public sector management has been another area of growth.

The centre is wary of competing with TAFE and has attempted to complement its provision. There appears to be some room to reassess needs for VET and how the providers can further co-operation. The MCEG has used TAFE teachers to provide courses in 'cooking and stretchwear'. There is said to be good 'follow-on' to TAFE courses in the computing area and this is seen as an area for partnership. The use of TAFE facilities is a key issue in whether the MCEG can expand its courses especially in the VET area, since the cost of other facilities, such as the town's 'multi-function' community centre, is prohibitive. The community centre uses a private security system, and the full costs of opening the premises would have to be passed on to students through fees – perhaps doubling the cost of a one-day seminar.

Skillshare and the Monaro CEG serve quite different clienteles. The Monaro, like many other CAECs, attracts mainly women, and most of its students are employed. Skillshare has a brief to serve unemployed people and the gender balance is more towards men. It has courses in hospitality (industry-accredited), office computing, and automotive repair at a local garage. More recently, the growth of 'elder care' services such as Home and Community Care in Cooma has led to an Introduction to Welfare Work course. The coordinator reports that lack of equipment prevents it from offering a course such as welding, and the high rents asked for hospitality venues makes it difficult to provide a better standard of courses.

Issues Emerging

- The need for a higher profile and 'shopfront' identity. The Monaro CEG may well have outgrown its office in a staff room corner in the Monaro High School, which is some way out of town. It may be that the MCEG would be better positioned 'in town' where it could better promote its identity as a community service, though the cost of such accommodation is a disincentive. There is a feeling that the name 'Monaro Continuing Education Centre' is a title that does not readily identify the centre as a community-based adult education provider or assist in promoting its courses more widely. The MCEG would need to consider these issues if it is to expand in coming years.
- Outreach to smaller centres. Cooma is an example of a larger centre that is better serviced by government than its outlying areas. There is not a strong promotion of adult education and training, or co-ordination of services, which might support a better outreach to outlying areas. Jindabyne is a rapidly growing area which wants more provision, though it is seen to be difficult to service. Monaro Skillshare has funded an outreach officer in the town. Monaro CEG's ability to service small towns is limited by costs. For example, a teacher has to be paid to travel from Cooma to teach in Berridale (36 km), but not to travel from Berridale to teach in Cooma. So finding local tutors and ensuring local support is the key to extending the MCEG's service, though this

is most likely to occur in arts and crafts areas than any other type of course.

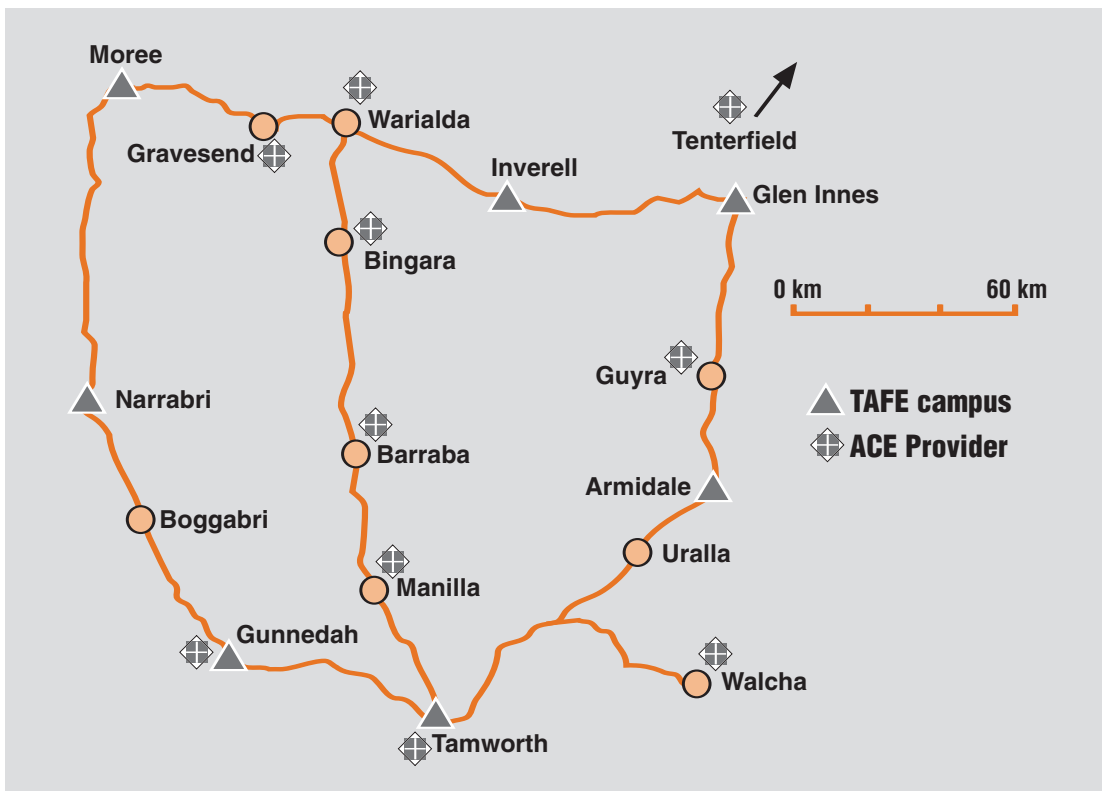
- Partnership with TAFE. Both Monaro CEG and Monaro Skillshare see themselves as creating pathways to TAFE, but it seems that there is a widening gap between TAFE which is concentrating on longer accredited courses and specialised needs and their own offerings. However, the MCEG Committee has chosen not to expand into accredited VET courses at present partly because it lacks the resources to do so. It is disturbing that lack of proper equipment and facilities was also seen by the Monaro Skillshare coordinator as a factor limiting their ability to provide quality VET courses. The question is therefore whether Skillshare and ACE together are able to meet the need for 'low end' vocational training in the Cooma area. It is clear that an increase in the range of VET courses cannot occur without the active cooperation of the TAFE college and a closer working relationship with TAFE, in which an issue is inexpensive access to facilities.

The centre feels that the current vocational emphasis is creating a dilemma for the sector. The assumption seems to be that small ACE centres can meet any gaps left by TAFE, yet do so without the same level of resources. The point was made that TAFE has publicly-funded, purpose-built facilities and yet 'groups with very limited resources have to struggle to provide vocational courses'. Thus Monaro illustrates the general importance, in view of the NBEET strategy, of securing much closer cross-sectoral collaboration than has been the case in the past.

Walcha Adult Learning Association

Walcha Shire (1991 population 3470) lies in the south-east quarter of the New England Tableland. Walcha town (1994 population 1700) sits about 150 kilometres inland, on approxi-

Figure 5.9 Location of Walcha and other CAECs in North West NSW



Year	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Enrol			231	647	586
SCH	Not available		4136	9494	7227
Courses			23	69	64

Table 5.15 Growth of Walcha Adult Learning Association, 1989 - 1993

mately the same latitude as the coastal town of Kempsey, mid-way between and slightly to the east of the major New England towns of Tamworth and Armidale. The age composition of the Shire's population accords with the NSW mean. But there is a very high proportion (87%) of Australian-born, a significant Aboriginal population (4%) and a low proportion of overseas-born residents (7%).

The mainstays of the local economy are pastoralism (fine wool, fat lambs, beef cattle) and forestry. Almost half the workforce (45.4% in 1991) is employed in agriculture, with the service industry being the next largest employer (some 35% of the workforce in 1991). The biggest single enterprise is the timber mill located in Walcha town, which in 1994 employed about 130 people. The Shire and the district hospital are the next biggest employers.

In common with other pastoral areas, Walcha has seen a long-term drift of population out of the area. Walcha is a small town and increasingly residents of the Shire travel to Armidale and Tamworth for shopping and other services. The long drought of the early 1990s and the long-term decline in wool prices have negatively affected the pastoral industry in the area. So far few people have been driven off their farms, but unless the weather and wool prices improve, it is likely that this will happen in the near future. Already, a lot of farm workers have been laid off and farmers increasingly depend on the labour of their families. The rural crisis has a flow-on effect to the rest of the local economy. Retailers are feeling the pinch and employment is said to be stagnant. It is likely that the negative economic effects of

the drought will continue to be felt for at least the next five years.

In 1991 two-thirds of Walcha's adult population had no educational qualification, and almost 40% of adults had left school before the age of fifteen. But one-quarter of adults were enrolled in tertiary courses and 20% of the adult population had a degree, a diploma or a trade qualification.

The Centre and its provision

As the map (Figure 5.9) shows, the north-west area has a group of CAECs – Warialda, Barraba, Bingara, Gravesend and Manilla, Guyra and Walcha – which are among the most remote in NSW, at least as this is measured by distance from the nearest other adult education provider. Most are considerable distances from the nearest TAFE college or campus.

Walcha Adult Learning Association (WALA) is the only adult education provider located in Walcha Shire. In addition, Armidale Skillshare and Armidale TAFE provide a few courses in Walcha, and some Walcha residents commute to Armidale for courses at the TAFE college and the University of New England. WALA was founded in 1984. The centre has office and classroom space in the old Walcha primary school, a facility it shares with the Walcha Telecottage, a government-funded computer access centre. The available WALA course and

enrolment statistics are set out in the following table.

There was a sharp decline in the number of courses and enrolments from 1992 to 1993, attributed to the rural crisis referred to above. In 1994 WALA offered a range of explicitly vocational courses.

These included –

- Computing courses – Introduction to computers, Basic keyboarding skills, Introductory desktop publishing, Word perfect for windows, Introductory computer-aided design
- Hospitality courses, including bar service
- Farming courses – Farming for the future, Worm farming, Dam building and Agricultural blasting

In addition, WALA provided the following courses which can be classified as vocationally-related in the sense that they may have employment, income-generation and income-substitution outcomes. These include, for such a small centre, an impressive range of art and craft courses: coil basketry, silver jewellery, water-colour painting, potting, sewing, screen printing, fabric printing, upholstery and furniture restoration, smocking, woodwork, spinning, painted finishes, calligraphy, picture framing, patchwork quilting, wall hangings, hat making, decoupage, candlewicking. Other courses offered include: first aid, still photography, video camera operation, microwave cookery, astronomy, garden landscaping, creative writing, salad presentation, yoga, massage, teaching children to read, languages (French and Japanese), and aqua fitness. WALA also offers literacy and office procedures courses, which are discussed below.

Vocational Outcomes

The Walcha case study again illustrates the complexity of the connections between community-based adult education and economic outcomes, which are often difficult to trace, or take a long time to become apparent.

However, the following links can be readily seen –

- Computer, office skills and hospitality courses have led to full or part-time employment for some learners. Some of this employment is generated by government-subsidised job-creation schemes.
- Art and craft courses frequently have income-generation or income-substitution outcomes. A woman who did the screen printing course now makes and markets bed-linen and table-cloths. A man who did a woodwork course with WALA several years ago now makes rustic toys and picture frames out of old fence posts. Another man who completed silver jewellery now sells self-made pieces from his refreshment caravan at a local scenic attraction. A group of women who did an heirloom course now sell baby clothes at a local craft shop.
- The Telecottage has the contract to do the books for the Salvation Army's Red Shield appeal, and is developing, as a commercial project, a text/photo catalogue for museum artefacts. Significant potential exists for the Telecottage to become involved in income-generation and employment projects linked to adult education courses. An example suggested by the WALA coordinator is on-line word processing for city enterprises.
- Literacy. WALA courses are providing vocationally-related education to a category of people frequently denied it: people with low levels of literacy. WALA's Computers and Literacy, and Basic Office Procedures courses have opened up educational and employment opportunities to Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal manual workers – two groups often not well serviced by ACE. Aboriginal graduates of these courses have found employment in the local hospital, land council, primary school, a cafe, the Telecottage and the Home and Community Care agency. The local Aboriginal Land Council will establish a cultural centre and museum in 1995. Funds have been obtained to employ six trainees for six months, after which the centre will have to be self-supporting. WALA will contribute to this effort by providing on-site literacy instruction for the trainees, as well as business advice. The WALA screen-printing tutor says the sale of screen prints

'will be a major source of income for the centre'.

Case studies of learners who have done the WALA courses illustrate the complex educational and employment histories of individuals and the vital role of community-based adult education in providing learning opportunities for them.

- Kevin is a thirty year old forestry worker who left school at fifteen to become an apprentice jockey. After a series of riding accidents put him out of the racing industry, Kevin worked as a shearer and rouseabout until 1989, when he got a job in the Forestry Commission. Kevin found that his lack of literacy skills severely disadvantaged him in his efforts to 'get on the ladder' in the forestry industry. Kevin enrolled in the Computers and Literacy course in October 1994. Newly married, with a five year old step-son, Kevin wants to gain literacy and computer skills for a mixture of family and occupational reasons.
- Robert is a young Aboriginal man who left school in Year 9. During the next several years Robert unsuccessfully sought work, at the same time doing a number of adult education courses – art at Armidale TAFE, a Job Club course at Armidale Skillshare, and employment access, keyboarding and office procedures courses at Walcha Telecottage. In 1994 Robert enrolled in the WALA Computers and Literacy course. This both sharpened his computing skills and, importantly, boosted his self esteem and gave structure to his days. Robert has now obtained a three year traineeship with the local Aboriginal Land Council, where he does clerical work and has become the office computer troubleshooter.

Links with other providers

WALA has a cooperative relationship with both Armidale Skillshare and TAFE, which are some distance away. Both the latter providers have used WALA's classroom space. Skillshare has in turn shared its resources with WALA – such things as videos, and an engine block for a

motor maintenance course. There is also informal articulation between courses offered by the three providers. It is common for people who have done computer courses at WALA to do further courses (eg Word Perfect, spreadsheets, MS Dos) at Armidale Skillshare. In 1994 TAFE provided an Office Skills course in Walcha, complementing the Computers and Literary and Basic Office Procedures courses offered by WALA. TAFE also regularly offers Dressmaking (Basic Sewing) and Interior Furnishing courses in Walcha. These year-long courses lead on from WALA short courses.

Gaps in provision

The current system of funding community-based adult education makes it difficult for centres like WALA to meet the learning needs of its clientele. The pressure on small centres to cover costs and even to generate surpluses, in the view of one interviewee, an experienced adult educator, 'cuts out a lot of people, because our courses are too dear for them'. This in turn forces the WALA adult education centre to specialise in providing the sorts of courses listed above, and to encourage other providers, including government departments, to offer other types of courses. While there are gains to be made by providers specialising in certain types of provision, there are also losses. In Walcha it seems that these include restricting the centre's capacity to offer inexpensive courses which deal with issues vital to the community, such as coping with the rural recession, or helping parents to deal with difficult adolescents. It also appears that the funding structure advantages middle class people, who can afford to pay fees, and disadvantages people on low incomes. An unintended result, then, of the effort to enhance the vocational outcomes of ACE is to force the sector to partially abandon its civic functions of providing courses that are useful in themselves rather than in market terms, and of providing educational opportunities to disadvantaged adults.

Access and appropriateness

Notwithstanding this last point, WALA continues to contribute to the traditional access role of community-based adult education. WALA is, in particular, reaching two groups often not well serviced by ACE – working class men and Aboriginal people. The Computers and Literacy and Basic Office Procedures courses have been important in attracting these client groups.

These courses provide skills and self-esteem to adult learners who chronically lack self-confidence in formal education settings. The WALA coordinator and literacy tutor, and students themselves, gave detailed accounts of how this transformation occurs.

The following factors seem to be crucial –

- ACE tutors are able to provide adult learners with the correct mixture of structure and support to equip them for formal study. An examination of lesson plans and evaluations for the Basic Office Procedures course over four terms reveals clear learning outcomes for the students and the tutor's deep knowledge of the learning and lives of individual students. Interviews with the tutor and some of the students confirm this. The impression one gets is that students feel very much at home in their learning at WALA.
- The use of varied and vocationally relevant teaching approaches is important to the success of these courses. Students receive work experience in local enterprises. Guest speakers from these same enterprises, and former students, provide learners with information about job and further education opportunities and requirements. Students in the Office Procedures courses are able to also join, as a matter of course, other WALA courses. This has resulted in some art and craft activities, screen printing in particular, being integrated with the literacy and computer teaching. (For example, computers have been used to design patterns for curtains, and a class logo.) Aboriginal students hosted a morning tea for their elders and exchanged learning with them. Students write letters to government

agencies requesting career information, or complaining about inadequate community services. They report on class activities in the local newspaper.

- The existence of a community mentor has been important in recruiting Aboriginal students to WALA courses and in keeping them in the courses. Most of the Aboriginal students enrolled in WALA courses come from Summervale, an Aboriginal reserve several kilometres outside town. The mentor organised the travel for these students, and advised the tutors on both the course content and process. The mentor initially enrolled in the course herself, but withdrew when the demands of her job as a community worker expanded.

A long range view

While the achievements of WALA are manifest, there is a need for centre staff to have time and resources to further develop the sort of appropriate and effective adult education that already exists. For example the need and demand exists for literacy education for forestry, shire and timber mill workers, and WALA has responded to this by initiating discussions with management in each of these workplaces.. Because many workers are unwilling to come to courses at WALA ('It's too much like school – you go to that room up the end of the corridor'), it would be necessary for literacy instruction to be integrated with workplace training. While the management of all three workplaces are supportive of this idea, resources are needed for it to happen, and WALA staff need time and support (in the form of in-service education about funding sources and procedures) to locate and secure those resources.

Other opportunities include –

- WALA could become an alternative adult high school for the considerable number of early school leavers in Walcha, offering the TAFE Certificate of Adult Basic Education, and accredited vocational training, as well

as another route to the Higher School Certificate.

- WALA courses could be better articulated with TAFE and other institutions.
- If it were equipped with CD ROM and educational software, the Walcha Telecottage could play a more important educational role, enabling Walcha adults to access a full range of distance education courses.
- Arts and crafts would more often have income-generation and income-substitution outcomes if more attention was paid to establishing and supporting cottage industries in isolated areas like Walcha.

Conclusions from the Small Centre Studies

The achievements of the five CAECs described above are remarkable considering the shoestring budgets on which they operate and their reliance on volunteers for their management committees. Like other community organisations, they have to find citizens with goodwill, enthusiasm and expertise willing to maintain the community-based adult education effort in their area.

The strengths of CAECs are those of others. They are responsive, flexible, non-threatening, accessible and user-friendly and above all, managed by a local committee in tune with the adult education needs of the locality. Those centres in our study have responded to the challenges of the vocational emphasis in a number of ways –

- By being strategic about their activity – identifying specific needs for vocational education and training and meeting these

needs without, at the same time, attempting tasks for which they are not resourced.

- By identifying groups who have needs that are not being met in the overall vocational education and training effort in the area – rural women, disabled people, the unemployed, Aboriginal people.

An emerging issue for the research is the limits which the nature of community adult education is placing on the ability of these small centres to perform a more substantial role in providing vocational education and training. Even if good teachers can be found (some from the ranks of TAFE teachers), this is no substitute for the kind of equipment and facilities needed to run a high-quality course.

A further consequence of the limited infrastructure of the CAECs is their capacity to compete for contract training. Since most centres operate with a part-time co-ordinator, applying for grants is additional work which adds an additional burden to the increased level of activity experienced by coordinators in the VET context.

The issue of links with other providers looms large. While there was evidence that CAECs were conscious of the need to avoid duplication of courses, and were willing to liaise with TAFE and other providers, there was little evidence of progress ‘on the ground’ towards the kind of active cross-sectoral collaboration envisaged by the 1991 NBEET Review. Much more work needs to be done in the area of articulation of courses, and the sharing of resources, venues, equipment and teachers if ‘cross-sectoral collaboration’ is to become a reality. Furthermore, the strong impression of the researchers is that there may be training gaps appearing as TAFE focuses more on longer courses – gaps that ACE and Skillshare are ill-equipped to bridge without resourcing more commensurate with the task. This is despite the remarkable achievements of centres in expanding their provision and widening the range of outcomes achieved.

Notes

- 1 Notable cases in other States were the Norlunga TAFE, South East Community College (Mt Gambier, SA), Wimmera Community College (Horsham, VIC), Burnie Community College (Tasmania) and Port Hedland Community College (WA). In NSW, the Mount Druitt Technical College was planned with a strong emphasis on meeting the needs of its locality.
- 2 This generalisation is supported by a number of developments during the implementation of the Scott Review recommendations, for example, the elimination of regional and local college consultative committees; the phasing out of short courses that were seen as meeting community needs; and the rationalisation of courses in a region, leading to the closing down of trades sections in country colleges where they were seen to be non-viable. This is reflected in the statistics for 1989 – 1993.
- 3 Scott Review, *TAFE's Commission for the 1990's*. This was sub-titled 'Restructuring vocational, basic and adult education in NSW' and referred to the establishment of 'ACE colleges' in rural areas (Scott, 1990).
- 4 An analysis of TAFE Statistics for the period 1989-1993 shows that the larger country colleges have generally grown faster than the smaller centres, though there are also numerous exceptions in high growth coastal areas, for example.
- 5 Several Regional Adult Education Officers were interviewed by the researchers which helped to clarify these issues. Their assistance is gratefully acknowledged.
- 6 From an ACE standpoint, the NBEET Report accords ACE a marginal role and reflects a bias towards participation in formal education and training for young people. The review underlines just to what extent ACE was invisible in both statistical and policy terms, before the Aulich Senate Standing Committee Report published in November 1991. See, for example, p.28.
- 7 Statistics Newsletter, May 1994, Statistical Services Unit, NSW TAFE Commission. This growth in TAFE over the last five years has been accompanied by a trend in for enrolments in smaller TAFE colleges to decline even though contact hours have increased, reflecting the longer courses being offered. Large regional colleges have grown faster than smaller colleges.
- 8 ACE VET Information Booklet, 1994.
- 9 The main indicators can be grouped under five headings: the structure and composition of the population (growth, proportion aged under 15 or over 55 years); educational qualifications of people aged 15 and over; household income levels; employment and self employment, workforce participation; and the types of occupations and industries in which people work. Full details of the community profiling can be found in the Technical Notes.

The community profiling suggested a number of conclusions. There are quite different areas of the state: metropolitan, coastal and rural (with some marked differences between rural-urban and more remote rural centres). However, LGAs within a region can vary widely, particularly between rural and non rural centres. Within-LGA differences (between towns and postcodes within an LGA) can be quite marked. Some indicators are more useful than others for social and economic profiling purposes. Most use has been made of population growth, proportion of older people, educational qualifications, and occupation and industry of employment. There is a trend for the LGA in which a small provider is located to exemplify the average value of an indicator for the whole BACE region. This means for example, that where there is a high (or low) value of an indicator in the region, the LGA of the CAEC will have that value – the area served by the CAEC reflects the regional trend, for example, of high population growth or low educational level. CAECs do not serve areas where these values are extreme.
- 10 The researchers acknowledge the assistance of a number of people in the small centres who welcomed our visits, gave us lengthy interviews and then commented on drafts of the five case studies: At Kiama, Wendy Bell and Bill Morris (Regional AEO); at Bellingen, Lyn Livingstone, (co-ordinator), Marianne Porter, Catherine Wood, Anne James, Roma Muller, Linda Brenton, Steve

Abel, Richard Frey, Eugene Krug, Mark O'Sullivan and Susanne Kane; at Griffith, Allison Hicks-Cudmore and Anne Gribble; at Walcha, Penny Leah and Jane Fletcher; at Cooma (Monaro CEG), Carole Slater, Judy Young and Margot Flynn.

11 Some caution is needed in using figures for ACE providers. There are two sources of these and all other statistics in the following case studies. The source for 1991 – 1993 figures is the ACE Statistical Collection, 1994. The Board provides no statistics for its providers before the new Board of Adult and Community Education because these

used a less rigorous collection method. Figures before 1991 are drawn from the useful CAEC Directory published every year by the CAECs Association. Occasionally this data is incomplete and at variance with the Board's figures, partly because they were collected at different times during the year. In the case of Kiama, the centre's figures differ from the official figures for 1991 and 1992 and the former are used here.

12 Source for all TAFE statistics in the report is the Statistical Newsletter, May 1994, Statistical Services Unit, TAFE Commission.

Expanding ACE's Vocational Role

WE NOW HAVE A CLEARER PICTURE of the outcomes of ACE courses than previous studies have been able to provide, because this picture is drawn from a range of perspectives. While the industry, participant and regional studies throw into relief particular concerns, they share many points of agreement about ACE's vocational contribution.

This chapter reviews the evidence of the previous chapters and meets the final requirement of the project brief: to suggest ways of enhancing and strengthening ACE's development in the VET system 'in line with the evolution of national training reform'. The chapter also recommends some future directions for research.

Expanding ACE's role in the VET System

The fundamental motivation for this research is to establish in what ways ACE contributes to

the emerging national vocational education and training (VET) system by providing clear information about the outcomes of its courses.

Policy priorities increasingly emphasise that the VET system needs to be a diverse and flexible one. ACE helps to achieve these goals of diversity and flexibility. The ESFC Second Report now sees the VET system as a broad framework of public, private and community provision (ESFC, 1993, Chapter Four), since only such a system can meet the full range of needs in the society.

The research has documented the outcomes of ACE courses from different perspectives – what participants gain, how the needs of industry are met, and the role of local and regional provision. The result is a multi-dimensional picture that can now help to set strategic directions for expanding ACE's part in the VET system.

This chapter examines the implications of the research for this question under several headings –

- Promoting lifelong learning in the VET system
- Expanding the range of accredited courses
- Sharpening the focus on occupational skills
- Widening the ACE participant profile
- Promoting the industry training roles of the sector
- Enhancing ACE's role in labour market training
- Collaborating with other VET providers.
- Achieving more equitable infrastructure funding
- Consolidating regional provision

Promoting lifelong learning in VET

ANTA states that 'to create and promote opportunities for lifelong learning' is one of the four priorities that underpin its National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training (ANTA, 1994,1). Reform has aimed 'to provide training that integrates industry, enterprise and individual needs and supports lifelong learning' (1994, 3).

National policy has not, as yet, clearly expressed what 'lifelong learning' is, nor has it spelled out some of the ways in which lifelong learning can be promoted. ANTA has recently described National Training Reform as comprising the eight areas of competency-based training, competency standards, recognition of training, curriculum delivery and assessment, entry level training, funding and the training market (ANTA, 1995). There is now a need to see how 'lifelong learning' can be achieved across these areas, and how it underpins the very qualities of the VET system aimed for by the National Strategy – responsiveness based on diversity, accessibility, cost-efficiency and quality assurance.

The research results presented in this report provide insights into the promotion of lifelong learning in the VET system. The research has produced some of the first 'hard evidence' on the question of **lifelong learning as a**

vocational outcome, in our survey of ACE participants (Chapter Three). In summary, ACE participants demonstrate qualities of 'lifelong learners' in at least five ways –

- **They are returning learners** – these are learners who seek recurring opportunities to upgrade or expand their knowledge and skills. Three out of four of these learners are employed and working in a range of occupations in the workforce. The traditionally knowledge-intensive occupations at the higher levels of the ASF are well-represented.
- **They see their skills in generic terms** – these learners report skill improvement in the key competencies as well as specific skills. The benefits to performance at work are also seen in generic terms, such as improved thinking. The particular key competencies gained are closely related to what courses participants take.
- **They are subject-oriented learners** – these learners are more likely to expect expanded subject knowledge from their course than any other outcome, including personal-social development, or improved career or business prospects. They also report this is the main way the course has life-relevance for them. For these learners, the 'course is the thing'. This is supported by the finding that course field of study is also the most important factor influencing type of outcome.
- **They are satisfied learners** – these are learners who express high levels of satisfaction in the course and they cite quality in tutoring, and the level and practical relevance of the course as the main factors assisting their learning.
- **They value access to learning** – these are learners who 'volunteer' to learn and when they take a course, are most concerned about whether the time and venue is convenient and whether the course is at the right level for them. They take advantage of courses offered locally, near their home or workplace.

In summary, these learners would seem to represent those groups in the workforce who have **an orientation to lifelong learning**. It is significant that many of them are women, and that many are in middle-level or sub-professional occupations including sales and clerical

work. The ACE clientele is diverse, and as Chapter Four showed, includes many local businesses making use of ACE for training purposes. On this basis, the research may suggest some directions for the promotion of lifelong learning in the VET system as a whole.

The following are some issues that might be considered:

- Lifelong learning **is learned**. The value of participation in short courses extends beyond their immediate outcomes. The participants in our research report positively on their experiences, and see gains wider than the course itself. The main way that courses had 'life-relevance' for them was by 'expanding their horizons'. The findings about the key competencies suggest that courses improve skills in a more widely applicable way. Thus the activity of course participation itself helps to orient people to adult learning as part of their lives.
- Lifelong learning **encompasses informal learning**. Lifelong learning embraces the range of experience from informal learning in the workplace and community through to formalised and accredited training. One challenge of training reform is to find ways to recognise and indeed promote informal learning in the workplace and community. The diverse VET system needs to provide many kinds of opportunities for people to move between informal learning and formal vocational education and training. From an ACE standpoint, the value of the short course is that it can assist adults to formalise their prior learning, and bridge the gap between experience and formal training.
For ACE, this means that articulation, especially with TAFE and formal providers, is crucial. The short course can meet a need without a great personal or financial cost to the adult learner or to the employer, but the question then, is how such short course opportunities are taken further and credited in formal training.
- Lifelong learning is **not a type of course or provision**. There is some danger that ACE could be represented as the sector that 'takes care' of the lifelong learning dimension of VET. This would clearly undermine the goal

of a VET system of being more responsive to 'industry, enterprise and individual needs'. Responsiveness and flexibility, as it is practised by ACE, is an important way to facilitate lifelong learning, *but lifelong learning is an orientation to be desired in every part of the VET system, not just ACE*.

The VET system might therefore look at ACE providers and ask 'what is ACE doing right?' What features of ACE attract the kind of learners who report their outcomes in terms of enhanced horizons and subject-centredness, and see the gains from their courses in terms of an enhancement of their generic skills?

- Lifelong learning implies a **wide range of vocational needs**. The findings of the research challenge the view that the main contribution of ACE to the overall VET framework is 'second-chance learning', the view taken by the Second Report of the ESFC (1993, 62). It certainly provides this for some people, but it is more accurate, on our evidence, to say that ACE is performing a recurrent education role for a majority of participants, providing access to courses that meet their adult learning needs, including upgrading workplace knowledge and skills.

In summary, ACE exemplifies some ways in which the philosophy and practice of lifelong learning can be promoted in the VET system.

Expanding the range of accredited courses

Accredited courses have expanded rapidly in 1994 but they are still overshadowed by the size and range of non-award provision in general programs in ACE. The research therefore did not highlight the role of accredited courses in achieving vocational outcomes, but it provides strong support for the view that this accreditation is an important strategy in expanding ACE's vocational role.

First, accredited courses complement its main strength of making adult learning opportuni-

ties widely available; they do not detract from it. Accredited courses have often developed on the broad base of the general program. They sharpen the focus on skills and may attract new groups of learners into the sector (both of these factors are discussed further below).

Second, accredited courses are an important means for negotiating articulation and credit transfer arrangements with other VET providers on the basis of competency-based program development and nationally-recognised training mentioned in Chapter Two. Thus they serve the strategy of increased collaboration with TAFE providers, indicated by the regional and small centre case studies (Chapter Five) which showed that size has been no barrier to accredited courses being provided by CAECs, uniquely positioned to meet local needs through this extension of their offerings.

Third, many non-accredited courses have employment-related outcomes for participants (Chapter Three) and employers are still using them for training staff (Chapter Four) especially in the business, computing and health areas. Accreditation will formalise the ways in which courses are intended to serve the needs of industry or occupations. This point is particularly important if ACE is to take a larger role in developing entry-level and middle-level qualifications for particular occupations.

The question, then, is how ACE can expand accredited courses and make the most of the potential of its comprehensive base of non-accredited courses.

Sharpening the focus on occupational skills

The research suggests that ACE is contributing to occupational skill formation in several ways. There is a potential to sharpen this focus.

The occupational profile of ACE learners (Chapter Three) shows that large numbers of people in sub-professional occupations are enrolling in ACE and gaining employment-

related outcomes from their courses. The middle-level skills are therefore well-represented, with many learners holding certificate level qualifications or above, though there were no major differences across the occupational or industry groups in the kind of course chosen. The data supports the view that up-grading the knowledge and skills of those already in the workforce is an important function of ACE.

If this is so, then there is some potential for ACE to explore other ways it could expand its contribution to workforce skilling, for example, in regard to those groups of learners who want occupational skills in an accredited modular form. The ACE-VET program could therefore be monitored to assess which occupational groups are taking advantage of it, compared to ACE as a whole.

A second implication for sharpening the focus on skill formation comes from the project's evidence on key competencies. ACE participants are able to use the Mayer key competencies to describe their skill outcomes, while disavowing outcomes expressed in more specific career or workplace terms. The key competencies are, in other words, meaningful categories for these participants. Moreover, there is a clear pattern in participants' responses. The communication, using technology and planning and organising areas stand out in both the participant and employer surveys, and these also have straightforward statistical models (see Chapter Three). Therefore, ACE providers might be encouraged to focus on generic skills and to communicate information about vocational outcomes in this way.

A third implication is that the emphasis placed on **courses** in our research on ACE is an appropriate one. ACE is important because of the very range of knowledge its courses make available, not simply because it provides access to learning opportunities. The strong relationships between key competencies, course field of study and the learner's expectations are very significant validation of the importance of the 'knowledge dimension' in ACE provision. This in turn suggests that ACE is correct to frame its strategic directions in these terms, for example, by moving to accredit selected courses.

From this point of view of access to knowledge, some comment can be made on the evidence that ACE's industry training is most intense in the business and computing area. Because ACE is 'market driven', providers will naturally concentrate their efforts in the areas of heaviest demand, as this is where surpluses can be generated to underwrite the total self-funded program (see Central Coast Community College study, Chapter Five). Providers might cast their net wider and target small business needs more systematically. Can more be done to identify the needs of this ACE clientele? Is there potential to diversify the range of courses offered? The case study of a customised 'successful selling' course (Chapter Four) illustrates that there may be scope to audit the needs of small business and provide a range of relevant training.

Finally, to suggest a sharper focus on occupational skills begs the question of the kind of industry needs that ACE is currently resourced to meet. The small centre case studies highlighted how restricted ACE is in being able to offer VET courses when it has such a poor resource base and little infrastructure. What real expansion of vocational opportunities in country areas can occur if ACE and Skillshare alike are being expected to provide basic vocational training without proper resources and equipment?

Widening the ACE participant profile

Much that has already been said points to the implication that ACE could consider whether to widen the range of learners that take advantage of ACE provision. This rests on the view that the typical ACE profile is concentrated in an unrepresentative cross-section of the community and a narrow range of occupations. The research suggests otherwise.

From the vantage point of the 1993 and 1994 survey research it is now possible to critically examine the pattern of participation. Is ACE attracting the participants that it wants to attract? Is it providing for these participants

what they want? Are there ways it can expand the profile of its participants?

The great strength of ACE, reflected in its occupational and demographic profile, is that a wide range of people use its services. They do so because of the informality and accessibility of courses. This strength now provides a basis for further formalising some courses as accredited programs and extending those programs which target groups with special needs. In other words, assured that it is making a strong general contribution to VET, ACE should now increase its emphasis on measures to meet the needs of particular groups of learners.

In drawing conclusions about 'who ACE participants are' and making judgements about which groups are or are not represented, it is necessary to take account of the limitations of the surveys. It is possible that learners in the CAECs, which have about 10% of all Board of ACE enrolments, are somewhat under-represented. However, the reality is that the vast majority of BACE enrolments are in larger providers, which were well-represented in the sample. Moreover, it should be stated that the sampling was limited to those 'main providers' assisted by the Board of Adult and Community Education. As the Board's own recent study 'State of Learning' showed, there are many providers outside that boundary contributing to ACE, though the impact of their provision on VET and its quality are as yet poorly documented (Brown, Gillam and O'Connell, 1994). More evidence is needed therefore, before concluding that certain groups are not well-served by ACE.

Two other points emerge. The studies reported in Chapter Five show that many providers are already assisting ACE to meet the needs of under-represented groups. They have targeted specific groups and provided programs to meet their needs, sometimes assisted with special funding. Secondly, many larger community colleges – both metropolitan and rural – have developed program-based services that are reaching populations of learners not typical of the 'average' ACE participant, for example in literacy or labour market programs funded by DEET. These developments are already an important factor in expanding the vocational role of ACE.

Promoting the industry training roles of the sector

The research explored the ‘training roles’ that ACE is performing. It found that ACE meets the needs of industry in a range of ways.

Perhaps the most significant finding of the research is that small business is actively engaged in training and using ACE to provide it. These findings are contrary to the view that small business does not engage in training. Our research suggests that many small businesses use ACE because they prefer short courses and value practical relevance, convenient timing and venues. The involvement in small business training was brought into focus by case studies of several large Sydney providers.

The research found that ACE in the metropolitan area is attracting small business to its general courses and there is comparatively little use of customised training (Chapter Four) which is demanded by larger employers where it occurs, for example on the Central Coast (Chapter Five). This appears to be consistent with a small business clientele. For example, the research reported data from St George-Sutherland REC which gave courses for over 400 employers in 1994, 90% of them in the Shire (Chapter Four). Further research is clearly needed, but it appears that short course training has been under-estimated by recent ABS employer training surveys (ABS, 1994).

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF IMPLICATIONS FOR ACE EXPANDING ITS INDUSTRY ROLE –

- **ACE should become better known to local business**

The research confirms that small business training in ACE is an important potential area of expansion for those providers not already engaged in it. Expanding and marketing its services to local employers should be a high priority for ACE.

First, it needs to be better known to this clientele and to the wider business community who have some negative perceptions of ACE courses. Telephone interviews found that ACE is well-known to fewer than a quarter of the employers identified as paying for courses. ACE appears to be a term that is not well-understood even by some who are clients. Second, it needs to direct its marketing of courses to small business and identify (as some colleges already do), a program of courses suitable for local business. The use of direct mail marketing to local employers could be more widely employed. This suggests that ACE providers need to track their business clientele better, perhaps using the kind of information that is already available in enrolment record systems.

- **ACE should continue to ‘market to its strengths’**

The employer study further showed that these employers prefer the kind of training ACE provides (Chapter Four) and in this they are very like participants as a whole (Chapter Three). These employers prefer courses that are short, at the right time and practical in emphasis. This is the meaning of ‘flexibility’ as employers understand it.

The key problem here not only for ACE but TAFE and other providers is how such short courses – clearly demanded by small business – are to be reconciled with the emphasis on accredited training. The high demand for business and computing courses by employers confirms that the move into ACE VET accredited courses in this area is soundly based and has potential for expansion. This is also the area where articulation to TAFE is beginning to occur.

Enhancing ACE’s role in labour market training

The role of ACE in providing contract training for government was examined through focus group discussion, an analysis of DEET data and

provider interviews, and the Chapter Five case studies. ACE can enhance its growing role in labour market programs in several ways.

- **Promote closer links with the CES**

A key finding of the small and regional studies and the focus groups with Principals is that some providers have been very successful in tendering for DEET programs. Those who have been most successful have often developed a close working relationships with the CES and the local DEET manager (Central West Community College study, Chapter Five). This is of course also true of some larger metropolitan colleges, are able to invest the effort in securing and administering such funding.

This 'responsiveness to the local community' and close links to labour market agencies were features of the community college model outlined in Chapter Five. It seems that VET providers are now much closer to this ideal and that some ACE colleges are providing a labour-market responsive service. A close link to the CES is the key to enhancing ACE's role in labour market training.

- **Seek individual placements in high demand areas**

With the advent of case management approaches to labour market and unemployment problems noted in Working Nation, there is more scope for providers, particularly small ones, to take advantage of this development. The alternative to tendering for small organisations is to sell their profile of courses to the CES and tailor their provision more to those who need skills that are in demand. So far, ACE has been oriented towards meeting both 'community demand' for the general program, and the needs of groups targeted by government policies including the disabled, Aboriginal people and the long-term unemployed.

The regional studies strongly support the expansion of ACE into more targeted programs for which government funding can be obtained. Even small providers have been successful in identifying specific needs and seeking funding for these. This targeted approach is in contrast to the 'general' or 'community' demand that very often is catering to one set of needs. From a vocational point of view, there is more need to identify

specific needs and cater to these with specialised programs. This an approach entirely consistent with the strengths of ACE in responding quickly to local needs with appropriate programs. Very often the general program provides a strong base for this to happen.

- **Focus on the needs of women**

The first chapter highlighted that the discussion of ACE might take for granted the large number of women who form the majority of ACE participants (Chapter Three). ACE has a clear charter – especially in the smaller providers – to expand the range of offerings for women with different sets of needs. The Kiama and Griffith studies, for example, illustrated the steps that can be taken to meet the vocational needs of specific groups of women in the workforce.

Collaborating with other VET providers.

To achieve an expanded vocational profile, ACE will need to develop closer working relationships with other publicly-funded VET providers. The research has suggested at many points how important the strategic relationship is with TAFE especially in local provision by community adult education centres.

The research strongly recommends that steps be taken to accelerate progress towards active partnerships between TAFE and ACE providers at the local level. The publicly-funded TAFE facilities are one of the richest resources of the VET system. The community providers (including Skillshare) need access to these resources to further develop their role in VET. The spirit of partnership outlined in the TAFE-ACE Strategic Plan requires much more active co-operation than is at present apparent from the studies in five small centres. The research has shown the tenuous nature of the resourcing of ACE (see below) and suggested that this may be placing a ceiling on the vocational training potential of small centres. Sharing of information and resources was highlighted as a problem area that needs to be

actively addressed at the local and regional level.

Further research is needed to explore the important area of the interface between different providers in local labour markets in non-metropolitan areas. With Skillshare restricted to the unemployed, it appears that in some country centres there may be a training gap emerging at the certificate level. In short, there is a need to investigate whether the demand for short accredited courses in local labour markets is being addressed by the current arrangements, and to what extent there are 'training gaps' in specific industries in rural areas.

Achieving more equitable infrastructure funding

The regional case studies (Chapter Five) showed that these Colleges, while very successful in diversifying their funding, are entirely dependent on continuing success in winning grants. Their achievements, notably in a range of employment-related outcome areas, is at best tenuous. Such infrastructure as they have developed is not underwritten by recurrent funding and their existence depends on a continuing success in the current policy environment.

The long term resourcing of the infrastructure of ACE providers is therefore a major issue emerging from the research. In its review of funding issues, the Senate Standing Committee concluded that 'nowhere are funding comparisons between sectors more telling or more detrimental to adult and community education than in policy on capital funding and attitudes to infrastructure costs' (Aulich, 1991, 137).

It is ironic that, in a policy environment which exhorts educators to focus more on the 'outputs' of education systems rather than their 'inputs', ACE providers have most attention directed to their 'outputs' and scant, if any, attention paid to the meagre 'inputs' with which its outputs are achieved. This research, in pursuing outcomes, uncovered the concerns about the inadequacy of the inputs as a factor

that is limiting the potential role of smaller providers in expanding their part in the emerging VET system. This is, as frequent reference to the NBEET position will have emphasised, partly a matter of cross-sectoral collaboration and better access by ACE to teachers, venues and equipment in TAFE colleges. However, it is also an issue of equitable infrastructure funding for the sector.

The research, in referring to the economics of rural ACE provision, will help to underline how simplistic is the view that ACE funding can be reduced to one of self-funding and cost-recovery. The two regional studies were selected as examples of providers grasping the nettle of diversification of funding as the answer to their stagnation as adult education providers. Their expansion into diversified programs and their greater contribution to the VET system is the result of decisions to face the financial realities of 'self-funded' adult community education. Their success in doing so does not remedy the problem of a lack of infrastructure funding.

The limits to the 'user-pays' principle are thus most apparent in rural areas which lack the population density, disposable incomes and concentrated clienteles of the urban educational marketplace enjoyed by many metropolitan providers. This research has reinforced the case, outlined in the NBEET Review and for two decades before, that different strategies are required to overcome the resourcing difficulties of non-metropolitan ACE providers, if the goal of reasonable access and participation in VET is to be achieved.

The argument for increased infrastructure funding rests on the evidence that with its inclusion in the national VET system, ACE is taking a larger share of the educational division of labour.

Further research on the outcomes of ACE

Current research represents an unprecedented investment of effort in analysing and documenting the activities of adult community

education in Australia. This project has further contributed to the research base for interpreting the role of ACE in the developing national training system.

It is first worth remarking that the 'outcomes' agenda has driven much Australian adult education research (Chapter Two), and this has been intensified by training reform. While this development is a cause for angst among some Australian critics (for example, Bagnall, 1994), it has arguably done more to sharpen the empirical force of Australian research, stimulate conceptual analysis and inform policy than any other single factor. The conceptual advance can be in part measured by the extent to which this project and the Victorian 'Outcomes and Pathways' studies have gone beyond the limited view that research on participation is about 'motives for participation' – a view that has led North American research into an impasse (Courtney, 1992).

The primary implication for further research therefore is the continuing development of better models of participation in ACE. However, it has also now clearer that there are larger research questions about participation in the larger VET system. As VET becomes more 'networked' and systematised, the greater will be the need for research that tracks learners as they move around the system, 'adding value' to their qualifications and experience, in the words of the Employment and Skills Formation Council (1994). There will be less justification for research that merely 'rides the boundaries' of a given territory of provision such as ACE.

Future research should give a high priority to studies of the ways learners negotiate pathways from one provider to another, and the way providers interface with each other as they take particular education and training roles. The research corollary of a vocational and education system that is diverse and offers clients a range of opportunities and forms of delivery, is a concern for evidence of how learners take advantage of this system.

This said, the project has uncovered several themes and issues that need to be taken up in further investigations. It has also acquired some insights into the methodologies that are useful in representing the complex web of provision that is adult community education

and indeed, in suggesting research in other parts of the VET system.

There are several fruitful directions for future studies –

- Course-taking and workplace learning. There is now a need to examine how short courses impact on learning in the workplace. Research could explore from a workplace learning perspective, how participation in short courses assists the development of specific and generic skills. This research would focus on workplaces rather than providers of courses.
- Women, skills and ACE. Further research should focus on skill levels being achieved in different occupational groups and, in particular, study the outcomes for women in the workforce using ACE to upgrade their skills. The research, in questioning the view that ACE is mainly second chance learning for women, suggests the need to explore how different groups of women use ACE to meet their learning needs.
- Re-entry to learning. There should be closer analysis of the relationship of ACE in providing 'second chance learning' especially in relation to size and location of provider. It should review the findings of the current research in the light of the Victorian three-state study (ACFEB, in progress).
- Small business and local training. The findings on ACE's role in training small business provide important leads for research that need to be followed up. Future studies could focus on selected LGAs and examine how small business is accessing training in different providers including ACE. There is need for the ABS to include community-based providers more explicitly in its surveys of employer training practices.
- Cross-sectoral collaboration. There is a need to investigate whether the demand for short accredited courses in local labour markets is being addressed by the current provision by ACE, TAFE and Skillshare. Research should examine whether or not, in country regions, there are 'training gaps' appearing and if so, how they might be overcome by more collaboration between providers as suggested by the NBEET Review.

- Community colleges and ACE. The project has argued that ACE has claimed the 'community college model' as its own. Further research might investigate this trend by carrying out further case studies of the emerging 'community college' in NSW and Victoria, the two States where an independent ACE sector is best developed. The research should assess their contribution to VET, particularly in regional terms, and examine their potential role in providing certificate level training.
- The economics of self-funding. The regional college studies support the conclusion that the 'self-funding' of nature adult community education is at best a myth, at least in

non-metropolitan Australia. There is a need for research to analyse in depth the economics of provision of VET in rural Australia, taking into account NBEET's call for a national strategy (NBEET, 1991).

Finally, future research could seek to build on the strengths of this project in several ways – by further improving the conceptual models that underpin the study of participation in VET, by using a combination of empirical-analytic and interpretive methods to document outcomes from different perspectives, and by ensuring that research takes account of the social and economic context in which needs and outcomes are defined by participants in the process.



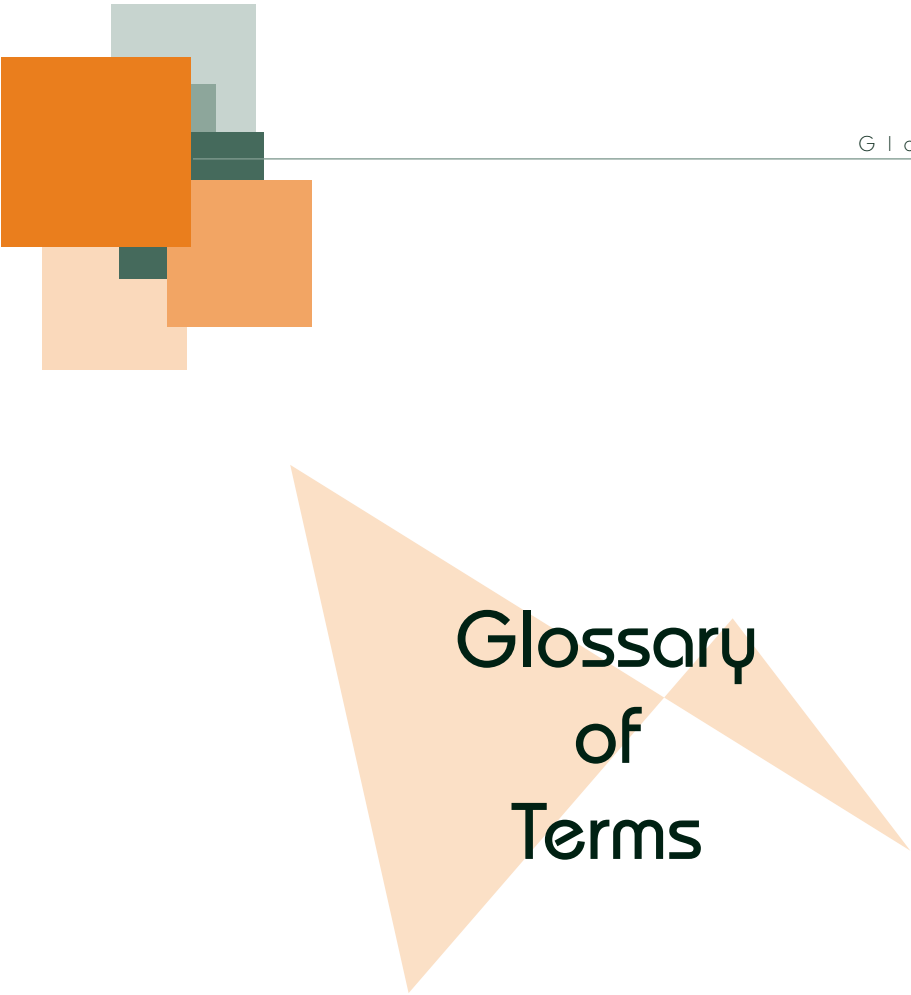

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Glossary of Terms

AAACE	Australian Association of Adult and Community Education	CTEP	Community Training and Employment Program (NSW)
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics	CWCC	Central West Community College
ACE	Adult and Community Education	DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training (Federal)
ACFEB	Adult, Community and Further Education Board (Victoria)	DIRETFE	Dept of Industrial Relations, Employment, Training and Further Education NSW
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions	ECCA	Evening and Community Colleges Association (NSW)
AEC	Australian Education Council	ESFC	Employment and Skills Formation Council
ALLP	Australian Language and Literacy Policy	ESL	English Second Language
AMES	Adult Migrant English (formerly Education) Service	MOVEET	Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority	NBEET	National Board of Education, Employment and Training
ASF	Australian Skills Framework	NFROT	National Framework for the Recognition of Training
BACE	Board of Adult and Community Education (NSW)	NTB	National Training Board
BVET	Board of Vocational Education and Training, NSW	TAFE	Technical and Further Education
CAEC	Community Adult Education Centre	TGA	Training Guarantee Act
CALM	Conservation, Agriculture and Land Management (NSW)	VETA	Vocational Education and Training Agency
CBT	Competency Based Training	VETAB	Vocational Education and Training Board
CES	Commonwealth Employment Service	WEA	Workers Educational Association



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