

Report:
**A career in the plastics, rubber and
cablemaking industry for people with a
disability**

**Victorian Office of Training
and Tertiary Education's
Teaching and Learning
Initiative**

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Executive Summary

This project, an Office of Training and Tertiary Education Teaching and Learning Initiatives Project addresses three objectives:

- (i) the current capacity of the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package, PMB01, to facilitate preparatory and vocational skills training for people with a disability
- (ii) a need to improve participation and provide effective pathways for people with disabilities in accessing vocational education and training leading to increased educational and employment outcomes
- (iii) to identify bridging program requirements that will provide access to appropriate nationally recognised qualifications.

The project has shown that demand for training of people with disabilities is low in the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industries and very few relevant training providers and trainers are available to market and deliver services.

This project undertaking supports the Bridging Pathways National Strategy that is a five-year commitment to improve access to vocational education and training for people with disabilities.

Consultations were held with a broad range of organisations servicing clients with disabilities including training providers, employment agencies, employers, government department and industry training advisory boards to identify effective training methods and areas requiring more attention to provide general access to people with disabilities.

Project findings revealed that pathways into the VET system for people with a disability are complex and confusing. It revealed a passionate and dedicated collection of service providers trying to make a difference for people with a disability, despite the complex systems. Existing pathways are deemed to be too disjointed and complex to result in effective VET outcomes for people with disabilities.

The project identified an urgent need for effective communication and collaboration between organisations funded to assist people with a disability to reduce confusion relating to service duplication, to fully explain procedures and policies and to encourage cooperative effort amongst the many agencies involved. To this end a number of recommendations have been made to address these issues and are included on the following pages.

The lack of effective data collection created difficulties in tracking participation rates for disabled people through all pathways.

Recommendations

Data collection

Expand gathering of VET statistics to include all enrolments and completions against national recognised competencies – not only DEST funded programs

VET related

Review and rationalise all preparatory skills training courses delivered in Australia and create a small selection of nationally recognised qualifications that address specific needs

Ensure that there is practical and significant work placement in preparatory skills training courses that are specifically prevocational

Create a meaningful and clear link between preparatory skills training courses and entry into a Certificate I PMB01 qualification

Develop a Wage Assessment Tool that is not only modelled on the VET system but results in nationally recognised competency outcomes

Develop a link between the CRS and training providers to ensure that the vocational assessments performed at the CRS result in nationally recognised Training Package outcomes

Develop incentives for training providers to offer a cost effective RPL/RCC service

Develop and promote programs that support people without disabilities to integrate with people with disabilities

Provide financial incentives to training providers for reasonable adjustment

Document best practice examples and innovative approaches to delivering VET outcomes to people with disabilities in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry for informative marketing purposes

Develop professional development programs to increase cross sector awareness

Develop a marketing strategy to address the lack of awareness within industry of the training programs, training providers and training delivery options available that is non biased and promotes training for people with disabilities

Industry related

Create a register of willing plastics, rubber and cabling host employers that can be targeted for employment placement training programs for people with disabilities

Identify all supported employment services in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry and aggressively market the Skills Assessment program drawing on the success of the Brite Industries example

Create a network of supported employment services that can exchange information about what works, what doesn't work and what is needed.

Collaboration

Create links between TAFE prevocational training departments and vocational training departments to facilitate pathways from preparatory skills training courses to Training Packages

Encourage collaboration between TAFE Disability Liaison services and the industry training departments to build awareness of Training Packages and the industry clients their institutes work with

Link private and public training providers to deliver combined, complementary training services

Encourage collaboration between training providers and disability professionals to provide professional support for disability professionals and professional development for the trainers

Create links between Group Training Companies, ITABs and industry bodies to promote training programs to the industry

Encourage collaboration between training providers and schools to provide PMB01 competencies in the VCAL certificate

Encourage collaboration within government departments to create equitable, seamless and complementary services that use common language

Create a vocabulary guide to support cross sector communications

Develop a program that exposes teachers, parents, careers advisors, integration aids and students to the process manufacturing industry and the pathways and supports available for people with disabilities

Create links between ITABs, training providers, supported employment agencies and industry bodies to promote the New Apprenticeship Access Program to the plastics, rubber and cabling industry

Create links between ITABs, supported employment agencies, private training providers and industry bodies to promote the uptake of PETP funding in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry

Encourage collaboration between Centrelink, supported employment agencies, training providers, NACs, Diversity@work, ITABs and industry representatives to promote training

Encourage collaboration between supported employment agencies, Diversity@work, ITABs and industry bodies to educate industry about the benefits of employing and training people with disabilities

Develop links between training providers and supported employment services to deliver nationally recognised training

Encourage collaboration between ITABs, industry bodies, Diversity@work and disability employment services to identify and reward willing host employers and promote the plastics, rubber and cabling industry as a viable employment and training option for people with disabilities

Encourage collaboration between the CRS, training providers and NACs to create a link between work placements and New Apprenticeships

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to seek information from key players within the Victorian Vocational Education and Training (VET) system about the current pathways for learners with a disability to access the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package qualifications and identify the pathway requirements and limitations.

This project was funded through the Victorian Office of Training and Tertiary Education's Teaching and Learning Initiative.

Background

In 1996 the Board of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) established the ANTA Disability Forum, a predecessor to the Australian Disability Training Advisory Council (ADTAC) that operates today.

The ANTA Disability Forum provides broad strategic advice on access and equity issues in the VET system for people with disabilities.

People with disabilities face difficulties in achieving employment outcomes compared with the broader community. In 1999, 3 million Australians reported a disability with only 54% participating in the workforce compared to 80% of the general population.

Achieving equitable employment outcomes for people with disabilities needs to be supported through equitable VET access. There exists a positive relationship between VET outcomes and employment outcomes.

Participation rates for people with disabilities demonstrate that equitable access is not currently available. In 1998 less than 2.5% of Australians with disabilities participated in the VET system compared with 11% of the general population. The Institute for Research into International Competitiveness (2001) estimates increasing the participation rates of people with disabilities in VET to the same level of the general population would generate an additional \$2.5 billion for the Australian economy.

In 1999, after formal consultations with a wide range of stakeholders across Australia, the ANTA Disabilities Forum developed the Bridging Pathways National Strategy. Then in June 2000 Australia's education and training ministers agreed to the Bridging Pathways strategy and blueprint making a five year commitment to improving access to vocational education and training for people with disabilities.

Bridging Pathways is a vision for a future where the diverse needs of individuals are recognised and both the VET and disability sectors collaborate to provide accessible and equitable VET pathways.

The strategy identifies four key goals and the first goal, focusing on improving VET pathways, is critical to this paper. The goal is:

“Opening the door to increase access to vocational education and training for people with a disability”

Pathways are the systems that assist people to enter vocational education and training, undertake courses at all qualification levels and gain employment if that is their goal. The Pathway strategies outlined in the Bridging Pathways Blueprint for Implementation are:

1. Facilitate preparatory skills training in National and State/Territory planning funding frameworks
2. Encourage the participation of people with a disability in vocational education and training at all qualification levels
3. Ensure that National Training Packages support the inclusion of people with a disability
4. Improve pathways for people with a disability into New Apprenticeships through collaboration between Group Training companies, employers and Disability Employment Assistance Services
5. Ensure that students with a disability have equal opportunities to participate in VET in Schools and gain equitable outcomes
6. Increase employment and training pathways for people with a disability through greater access to recognition of prior learning or current competencies (RPL/RCC)
7. Foster clear pathways for people with a disability from vocational education and training into employment services and directly into employment.

This paper explores these Pathway strategies as they relate to people with disabilities accessing vocational education and training in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry.

Project Objectives

This paper addresses the following objectives:

1. To evaluate the current capacity of the Plastics, Rubber and Cabling Training Package (PMB01) to facilitate preparatory and vocational skills training for people with disabilities
2. To improve participation and provide effective pathways for people with disabilities in accessing vocational education and training leading to increased educational and employment outcomes
3. To identify bridging program requirements that will provide access to appropriate nationally recognised qualifications.

Scope

The scope of this report includes the following:

1. People with disabilities

A definition of disability according to the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* is provided in the Appendix 1. People with disabilities seeking a VET outcome include:

- Young to mature people seeking employment and/or qualifications in open and supported employment
- Existing workers
- Workers in supported work environments
- People in school and/or training settings

- People in special accommodation moving into employment.
2. Training Package qualification
This report specifically focuses on the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package PMB01. As this training package was only endorsed in 2002 the Australian Vocational Education and Training statistics presented in this report relate to the original and still current Training Package, PMB98.
 3. Geographic locations
The research for this report includes participants from both metropolitan and regional Victoria.

Assumptions

In an endeavour to deliver a meaningful report outcome in a subject area as wide and complex as VET outcomes for people with disabilities the following three key assumptions have been made:

- This report does not explore the issue of whether a VET outcome truly does lead to an employment outcome. In fact research (Ball 2000) has shown that people with disabilities show lower success rates in terms of employment outcomes and income after study compared with the general VET population.
- This report does not explore the influence the different types of disabilities have on access to vocational education and training and success rates. Research (Ball 2000) has shown greater levels of participation by people reporting physical and visual disabilities compared with hearing, intellectual and chronic illness disabilities.
- This report does not discriminate between a supported employment outcome and an open employment outcome and considers them to be legitimate and successful employment outcomes. It should be stated that not all players consulted during the preparation of this paper shared this view.

Methodology

1. Literature search to identify policies, trends and directions with respect to the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry, VET pathways and access and equity for learners with disabilities in the VET system
2. Statistical analysis of recent VET participation rates in the Plastics Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package
3. Evaluation of capacity of PMB01 to facilitate preparatory and vocational skills training for people with disabilities and identify current training and preparatory training requirements to achieve Certificate I and Certificate II
4. Consultation with training providers involved in the delivery of training using the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package to identify their current practices with respect to providing VET pathways for learners with disabilities

5. Consultation with other relevant key players (employment agencies, Group Training Companies and government service providers) with respect to their current practices with learners with disabilities
6. Case study analysis of current practices and opportunities, strengths, challenges and limitations at Brite Industries, Noble Enterprises and Merriwa Industries
7. Identification of VET pathways available to all people in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry
8. Assessment of the availability of VET pathways for learners with a disabilities in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry identifying gaps and bridging opportunities
9. Clarification of gaps and identification of bridging pathway requirements.

Statistical analysis

VET Student Characteristics

Disability Types

In 2000, 62082 (4.5%) VET students reported a disability. Over 30% of students reported the disability as “other” or “unspecified”.

Table 1 Types of disabilities reported by VET students in 2000

Disability	%
Visual disability	15.5
Hearing disability	11.5
Physical disability	20.7
Intellectual disability	12.5
Chronic illness	8.1
Other disability	22.8
Unspecified disability	9.0
Total disabilities reported	100.0

Source: NCVET (2000) Australian VET Statistics. At a Glance: Students with a Disability in Vocational Education and Training.

Only 4.5% of the VET population reports a disability

Age

Students reporting a disability tend to be older than VET students overall. In 2000 38% of students reporting a disability were aged over 40 years compared with 30% of all students.¹

Students with disabilities in VET are older

Schooling levels

Students reporting a disability tend to have lower levels of schooling than VET students overall. In 2000 only 30% of students reporting a disability had achieved year 12 compared with 43% of all VET students. 25% had an education level of year 9 or lower compared with 12% of all VET students.²

Students with disabilities in VET have lower schooling levels

Employment status

Students reporting a disability are less likely to be employed than other VET students. In 2000 over 60% of VET students reporting a disability were not in employment compared with 33% of all VET students.³

Students with disabilities in VET are less likely to be employed

Participation Rates

Aggregated data relating to participation rates in VET activities is available for the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) funded pathways only. Participation rates for other pathways such as fee for service and the Skills Assessment Program are not included in the following statistical analysis.

Training Package participation rates

In 2000 the proportion of the total VET population reporting a disability was 4.5%⁴. In that same year the proportion of the VET population reporting a disability and participating in a PMB98 qualification was 0.9%. Thus out of 1117 enrolments for Certificates I, II and III only 10 reported a disability.

This was a vast improvement over 1999 when there were no enrolments reporting a disability. In 2001 the proportion increased with 2.2% or 39 out 1809 enrolments reporting a disability.

Table 2: Per cent of students enrolled in a PMB98 qualification reporting a disability

Year	Reporting a disability	Not reporting a disability	Total	Percentage with a disability
1999	0	21	21	NA
2000	10	1107	1117	0.9%
2001	39	1770	1809	2.2%

Source: NCVET Unpublished statistics

Only 2.2% of people enrolled in PMB98 report disabilities

Course participation rates

Enrolments in the Certificate I in Polymer Processing continued at a declining rate during 1999 to 2001 as PMB98 was being phased in. Total enrolments decreased from 422 in 1999 to 73 in 2000 and only 45 in 2001.

In 2000 the proportion of VET students enrolled in the Certificate I in Polymer Processing reporting a disability was 5.5%, significantly higher than the proportion of the total VET population reporting a disability of 4.5%. In 2001 the proportion of VET students enrolled in the Certificate I in Polymer Processing had dropped to 4.4%.

Table 3: Per cent of students enrolled in a 3326 / 2106ADA Certificate I in Polymer Processing reporting a disability

Year	Reporting a disability	Not reporting a disability	Total	Percentage with a disability
1999	9	413	422	2.1%
2000	4	69	73	5.5%
2001	2	43	45	4.4%

Source: NCVET Unpublished statistics

4.4% of people enrolled in the Certificate I course report disabilities

Comparison of Training Package and course participation rates

In 2000, 0.3% of students enrolled in PMB10198 reported a disability compared with 5.5% of students enrolled in the course program. In 2001 the proportion of students enrolled in PMB10198 had increased to 3.5% compared with 4.4% of students enrolled in the course program.

Table 4: Per cent of students reporting a disability enrolled in a Training Package qualification compared with a course at AQF level I

Year	Percentage reporting a disability		
	PMB9810198	3326 / 2106ADA	Total
1999	0.0%	2.1%	2.0%
2000	0.3%	5.5%	1.1%
2001	3.5%	4.4%	3.6%

Source: NCVER Unpublished statistics

More people with disabilities are enrolled in the plastics course than the Training Package

AQF Level

In 2000, 16% of VET students reporting a disability were studying at AQF level III compared with 20% of the total VET population. Also 12% of VET students reporting a disability were studying at AQF level I compared with 5% of all VET students.⁵

Enrolments for PMB98 show different patterns for both those students reporting a disability and for those students not reporting a disability compared to the total VET population.

In 2000 there was a fairly even spread of total enrolments in PMB98 across the three AQF levels with slightly more enrolments at AQF levels I and II compared with AQF level III. During that same year based on a very small sample of only 10 students reporting a disability there was a significantly higher level of enrolments at AQF level II compared with AQF levels III and I.

In 2001 there was a redistribution of the total enrolment spread. Enrolments at AQF level I stayed the same whilst the enrolments at AQF level II decreased and AQF level III increased. Just over half the enrolments of students reporting a disability were at AQF level I, a quarter at AQF level II and the remainder at AQF level III.

The enrolment data suggests that whilst enrolments for most students is moving away from AQF level II to AQF level III, the enrolment trend for students reporting a disability is in the opposite direction.

Table 5: Per cent of students enrolled in a PMB98 qualification reporting a disability by qualification level

AQF level	1999		2000		2001	
	Reporting a disability	ALL	Reporting a disability	ALL	Reporting a disability	ALL
I	NA	85.7%	10.0%	34.1%	53.8%	33.8%
II	NA	14.3%	70.0%	36.7%	25.6%	28.9%
III	NA	0.0%	20.0%	29.2%	20.5%	37.2%
Total	NA	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: NCVER Unpublished statistics

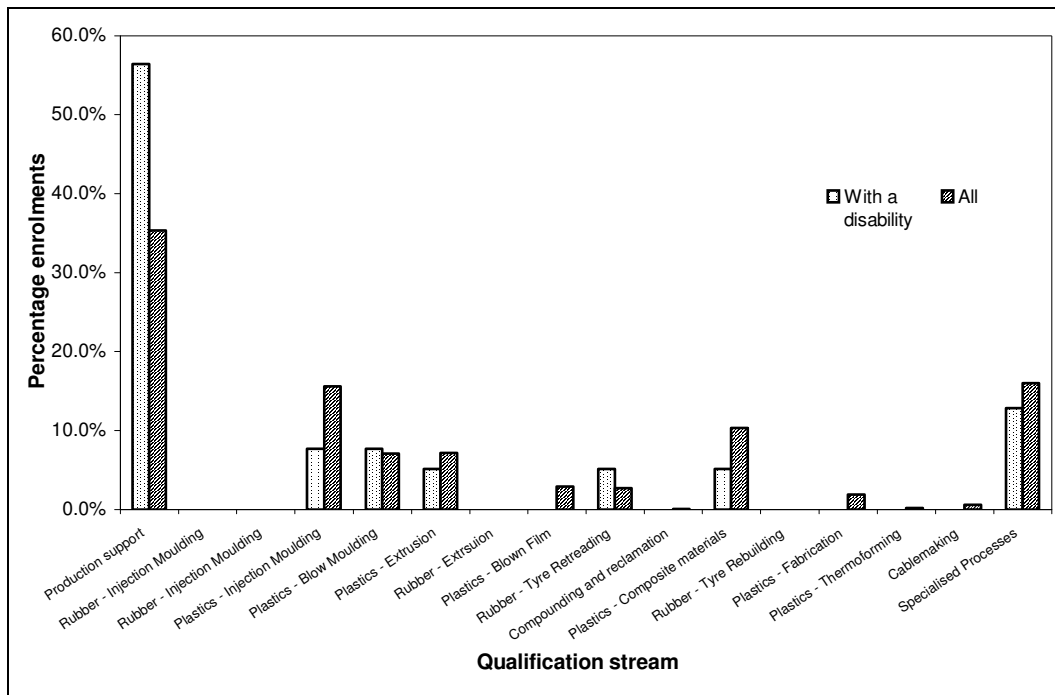
Half the people reporting a disability are enrolled at AQF level 1

PMB98 qualification streams

PMB98 offers 15 industry-specific qualification streams. In 2001, 1809 students enrolled in 10 out of 15 qualification streams. Significantly for the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking industry there was a very low up take of the rubber based qualification streams.

The three most popular qualification streams for both students who did and did not report a disability were Production Support, Plastics – Injection Moulding and Specialised Processes.

Figure 1 2001 Percentage PMB98 enrolments by qualification stream for students that did and did not report a disability



Source: NCVET Unpublished statistics

A significantly greater proportion of students reporting a disability enrolled in the Production Support stream. Within the Production Support stream the majority of enrolments occurred at AQF level I for both students who did and did not report a disability.

Table 6: 2001 Production support enrolments

AQF Level	With a disability		All	
	Enrolled	Percentage	Enrolled	Percentage
I	21	95.5%	599	95.7%
II	1	4.5%	24	3.8%
III	0	0.0%	3	0.5%
Total	22	100.0%	626	100.0%

Source: NCVET Unpublished statistics

Half the people reporting a disability are enrolled in the Production Support stream

Unit outcomes

In 2000, 74% of the VET population reporting a disability achieved successful unit outcomes compared with 80% of the total VET population.

In 2000, 2315 students enrolled in PMB98 AQF level I units and 52 (2.2%) reported a disability. In 2001 there was a 52% increase in unit enrolments with a total 3529 student enrolments and 98 (2.8%) reporting a disability.

In 2000 PMB98 successful AQF level I unit outcomes were significantly higher for students reporting a disability (94.2%) than for all students (83.6%).

In 2001 there was a significant drop in the AQF level I unit outcome success rates for students reporting a disability from 94.2% in 2000 to 78.6% in 2001, whilst the unit outcome success rate for all students only dropped slightly from 83.6% in 2000 to 83.3% in 2001.

The main reasons for the drop in the outcome success rate for students reporting a disability was a lower successful assessment rate, a lower RPL rate, a higher withdrawal rate and an increase in the unsuccessful assessment rate.

Table 7: 2000 and 2001 outcomes of PMB98 unit enrolments

Unit outcome	With a disability		All	
	2000	2001	2000	2001
Assessed - successful	84.6%	74.5%	69.9%	69.0%
Non assessed -completed	0.0%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%
RPL	9.6%	4.1%	13.5%	14.3%
Credit transfer	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total successful	94.2%	78.6%	83.6%	83.3%
Total continuing studies	0.0%	0.0%	7.8%	1.1%
Assessed -unsuccessful	3.8%	18.4%	8.2%	14.3%
Non assessed -not completed	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Withdrawn	1.9%	3.1%	0.4%	1.3%
Not stated	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total unsuccessful	5.8%	21.4%	8.6%	15.6%
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: NCVET Unpublished statistics

Half the people reporting a disability are enrolled in the Production Support stream

RPL/Credit transfer unit outcomes

In 2000, 5.6% of all students reporting a disability achieved a successful outcome through RPL/Credit transfer compared with 6.8% of the total VET student population.

In 2000, 9.6% of students reporting a disability enrolled in PMB98 AQF level I units achieved a successful outcome through RPL. In 2001 this figure dropped to less than half (4.1%). In contrast in 2000, 13.5% of all students enrolled in PMB98 AQF level I units achieved a successful outcome through RPL and this figure increased to 14.3% in 2001.

RPL rates for people with disabilities are dropping

Unit selection

PMB98 offers 12 AQF level I units of which four are compulsory units.

In 2001, 55.1% of students reporting a disability enrolled in compulsory units compared with 44.9% of all students.

Competencies relevant to safety in the workplace, PMBOHS01A, PMBHANDLE03A and PMBMAINT01A, were the most popular units for both students reporting a disability and all other students.

Half the people reporting a disability are enrolled in core competencies

In PMBCALC01, the only numeracy competency, there were no enrolments for students reporting a disability and 8.4% enrolments for all other students.

There are no people with disabilities enrolled in the numeracy competency

Table 8: 2001 AQF Level I unit enrolments

Unit	With a disability	All	Compulsory
PMBCOMM01A	9.2%	10.1%	Yes
PMBOHS01A	28.6%	17.5%	Yes
PMBCOMM03	0.0%	0.0%	Yes
PMBHANDLE03A	17.3%	17.3%	Yes
PMBCALC01A	0.0%	8.4%	No
PMBWASTE01A	0.0%	2.0%	No
PMBWKOPS01A	13.3%	7.3%	No
PMBMAINT01A	14.3%	15.9%	No
PMBPROD33A	0.0%	1.6%	No
PMBQUAL01A	10.2%	8.5%	No
PMBHANDLE04A	1.0%	1.8%	No
PMBWKOPS06A	6.1%	9.6%	No
Total	100.0%	100.0%	No

Source: NCVER Unpublished statistics

Preparatory skills training course outcomes

The Certificate I in Work Education (21108VIC) is a post school course (for students of 16 years of age or over) designed for people with disabilities who have special learning needs. It prepares them to gain mainstream employment involving routine, predictable, repetitive and proceduralised tasks under supervision or undertake further vocational training.

This is a new course and in 2001 there were 1727 student enrolments and 45.1% of students reported a disability.⁶

There is no NCVER data available to assess the link between preparatory courses and PMB98 outcomes.

Many people with disabilities enroll in preparatory skills training courses

Higher AQF Levels

Higher-level qualifications in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry are represented by courses rather than Training Package qualifications. The courses are gradually being phased out with the introduction of PMB01.

In 2001, 2.4% of students enrolling in the Certificate IV in Polymer Technology reported a disability.

In 2001, 2.9% of students enrolling in the Diploma of Engineering (Polymer Technology) reported a disability, a slight increase from 2.8% in 2000 and a significant decrease from 8.7% in 1999.

Table 9: Vocational course enrolments in 11891VIC / 2406ARC Certificate IV in Polymer Technology

Year	Reporting a disability	Not reporting a disability	Total	Percentage with a disability
1999	0	0	0	NA
2000	0	69	69	0.0%
2001	3	122	125	2.4%

Source: NCVER Unpublished statistics

Table 10: Vocational course enrolments in 2223 / 2506ABC Diploma of Engineering (Polymer Technology)

Year	Reporting a disability	Not reporting a disability	Total	Percentage with a disability
1999	9	95	104	8.7%
2000	11	386	397	2.8%
2001	4	136	140	2.9%

Source: NCVER Unpublished statistics

People with disabilities participate in higher AQF level courses at higher rates than they participate in the Training Package

Group Training Companies

Group Training Companies are the largest employers of teenage apprentices and trainees. In 1995 the number of people in group training reporting a disability was 0.8% and in 2000 it had increased to 3.3%. Group Training Companies employ a quarter of all apprentices and trainees reporting a disability.

Table 11: Participation in group training apprenticeships and traineeships by people reporting disabilities 2000

	Percentage enrolled	Percentage Completion
Reporting a disability	3.3%	2.2%
No disability	96.7%	97.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
Number	38440	11940

Source: NCVER (2001), Analysis of funded and non-funded group training companies, 2000, NCVER

Group Training Companies are large employers of people with disabilities participating in

Review of accessibility of courses

Preparatory skills training courses

Preparatory skills training courses describe the lower level preparatory and prevocational courses in the VET sector, AQF level I and lower. These courses are designed to prepare people for vocational education and training, employment or community participation. Examples of preparatory skills training include language, literacy and numeracy, job skills and workplace knowledge, study skills and pre-vocational tasters.

The success of pre-vocational preparatory skills training courses can be measured by the success with which they assist people with disabilities to progress to higher levels of training (AQF level II and above).

Research (Phan 2000) found that students reporting disabilities were less likely to progress to higher levels of training after completing a preparatory skills training course and 57% enrolled in a course of the same level of qualification (i.e. another preparatory skills training course).

The study also found that students reporting disabilities had enrolled in preparatory skills training courses with the view to finding employment rather than progressing to further vocational education and training.

Preparatory skills training courses are not assisting people with disabilities to progress to higher levels of training

Training Packages

A Training Package is a consistent and reliable set of nationally endorsed competency standards and qualifications for recognising and assessing people's skills developed by industry through Industry Training Advisory Boards (ITABs).

Competency standards describe the work requirements for the industry from the industry's perspective. Standards describe⁷:

- The kinds of skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to be applied in work activities
- The indicators that describe when someone performs these activities
- What employers and workers describe as the required competence
- The criteria used for assessment of competency.

An equity advisory service assists developers and reviewers of Training Packages to enhance opportunities for indigenous people and people with disabilities. The equity advisory service also reviews the accessibility of packages for these groups.

Previous investigations into the accessibility of Training Packages (Dunfee 2000) have revealed limitations with respect to the capacity of Training Packages to meet the needs of people with disabilities. These limitations are:

- Training Packages are focused on specific vocational outcomes and preclude more general, broadly based or prevocational training
- Specifications in Training Packages are narrow and do not contain student support elements, generic competencies or underpinning skills and knowledge
- Training Packages are qualifications rather than training and assessment programs and funding is allocated against qualifications. There are no variations to funding based on adjustments to training delivery and assessments that accommodate learner requirements
- Not all Training Packages contain a Certificate I level qualification
- Training Packages relate to specific industries and therefore do not allow flexibility to explore a range of skills covering a range of industries
- There are references only to underpinning knowledge including literacy, numeracy, communication skills, team skills and workplace behaviour, ethics and image
- There is no recognition that the Key Competencies need to be developed.

The Bridging Pathways blueprint recognises these limitations and has identified the facilitation of preparatory skills training as a priority area.

Training Packages are limited in their ability to meet the needs of people with disabilities

Evaluation of PMB01

The Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package, PMB01, has a compulsory core of units at each Certificate level, and elective or stream core units drawn from the PMB01 or other Training Packages. The package has six qualification levels from Certificate I through to Advanced Diploma offering both generic (all AQF levels) and streamed (16 at AQF level II and III) courses. A detailed guide to the PMB01 pathways is provided in Appendix 3.

Unfortunately the timing of the revision of PMB98 to PMB01 predated the introduction of the equity advisory developers and there is no equity report for PMB01.

Without conducting a full equity analysis of PMB01 the following comments can be made:

1. Reference is made to equity and reasonable adjustment in the Assessment Guidelines:

“Reasonable adjustments are to be made to ensure equity in assessment for people with disabilities. This means that wherever possible, ‘reasonable’ adjustments are to be made to meet the individual needs of a person with a disability. Adjustments are considered ‘reasonable’ if they do not impose an unjustifiable hardship on a training provider or employer.

When assessing people with disabilities, assessors are encouraged to apply good practice assessment methods with sensitivity and flexibility.”

Further information relating to reasonable adjustment is provided in Appendix 2.

2. Reference is made to the fact that RPL must be made available to all students
“The RTO’s Recognition of prior Learning (RPL) process must be accessible to all applicants upon enrolment and must:”
3. PMB01 includes an AQF level I qualification and a broad range of AQF level II qualifications.

There is no equity report for PMB01 but it appears to meet the basic requirements

Consultations

Consultations were conducted with a variety of stakeholders involved in providing and facilitating pathways for people with disabilities into the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package. A list of organisations consulted is provided in Appendix 4.

Participants were consulted via telephone and face to face interviews. Managers from private providers and Disability Liaison Officers from public providers were invited to participate in a survey for this paper. A copy of the survey is provided in the Appendix 5.

A workshop was also attended by interested stakeholders to discuss issues raised whilst researching this paper.

Training providers

The current breakdown of training providers registered to deliver training in Victoria in the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry is presented in the table below.

Table 12: Numbers of training providers registered to deliver in Victoria

Training Package	Public Providers	Private Providers	Enterprise Providers	ACE Providers	Total
PMB01	4	8	1	0	13
PMB98	9	18	2	1	30

Source: www.ntis.gov.au

Private training providers

Managers and owners from four private providers thought to be active in delivering training in the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package were asked to respond to the survey. The private providers were not Group Training Companies.

None of the private training providers consulted reported delivering training to people with disabilities in the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package. The main reason given was that their existing plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry clients did not employ people with disabilities.

There is no demand for training people with disabilities in the industry

The private training providers were delivering training to people with disabilities in other industries and had the mechanisms in place to provide reasonable adjustment.

Concerns raised by individual trainers consulted include the transportability of the qualification and the delivery of the competency assessment process. For example, does reasonable adjustment for a person with an intellectual disability include task instructions during the assessment? Is competence in a supported employment environment the same as competence in an open employment environment? The fact that these questions remain unanswered is creating a barrier to promoting and providing VET training to people with disabilities.

Private training providers are unsure about reasonable adjustment particularly with respect to assessment

Lack of appropriate funding to provide a quality training service to people with disabilities was also reported. The current funding programs do not adequately fund the strategies required for reasonable adjustment that may include increasing the number of training sessions, support from a disability specialist and language, literacy and numeracy support.

Funding is not available for reasonable adjustment

All these problems become even greater when delivering in rural areas. Funding needs to cover travel time, there is no access to specialist support and the trainee may live in isolation and have limited social skills.

Access to preparatory skills training courses in rural areas is also severely limited by the lack of training providers willing to provide flexible delivery options that suit the individual's needs.

Creating access VET for people in rural areas is difficult

Public training providers

Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs) from seven public providers thought to be active in delivering training against the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Packages were asked to respond to the survey. Two out of seven DLOs were not aware that their TAFE delivered training against the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package and that they had current industry clients. In some cases this was thought to be due to the separation of TAFE industry programs (training in the workplace) from educational programs (training in the classroom).

Generally speaking DLOs across all the TAFEs consulted demonstrated a low understanding of Training Packages, some indicating that they had never seen a Training Package.

Disabilities Liaison Officers are not aware of the industry programs their institutes deliver

Industry trainers consulted were delivering training to students without disabilities and had no experience delivering Training Package outcomes to people with disabilities. Concerns were expressed regarding the practicalities of delivering training to people with disabilities. For example a visually impaired person may find it harder to gain a Training Package outcome than a course outcome because of the emphasis on practical training and assessment. There was also uncertainty regarding how far you could take reasonable adjustment. For example, if you use an interpreter during assessment are you assessing the interpreter or the student?

Public training providers are unsure about reasonable adjustment particularly with respect to assessment

The two main public training providers of the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package in metropolitan Melbourne are Chisholm Institute of TAFE and Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE.

Chisholm delivers preparatory skills training courses to students with disabilities and specialist plastics industry training in the classroom and in industry through the Centre for Polymer Technology.

Students are referred to the preparatory skills training courses via word of mouth, special schools, mainstream schools and the Department of Human Services. Students who are over 18 years of age often participate in the Futures for Young Adults Program. Students at Chisholm can select eight taster modules. A specific taster module is delivered if a minimum class requirement of 10 students is met.

In the two years since this course commenced two groups of up to 10 students with disabilities have enrolled in the plastics taster. A team of two consisting of a plastics trainer and a disabilities specialist who supported the students delivered the training. The classes were attended by between one to eight students. Issues with limited attention span, poor dexterity and a high need for supervision made training delivery difficult. The class size requirement has now increased to 14 and disabilities staff report that interest in the plastics taster is in decline and they don't expect sufficient interest to offer the plastics taster in 2003. The training was not mapped against plastics course or Training Package outcomes.

Interest in plastics taster courses is in decline

Currently there are no students reporting a disability participating in the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package at Chisholm. In the past students with learning disorders and visual and hearing impairments have participated in plastics courses. These students have been assisted with specialist support such as note takers and tutoring services.

Kangan TAFE delivers a range of preparatory skills training courses to people with disabilities who may go on to further training and/or employment in both open and supported environments across a range of industries such as retail, office administration and hospitality. To date no link has been established between the preparatory skills training area and the polymer department.

Kangan delivers training in the plastics industry on campus at their Centre for Polymer Engineering and in industry. Currently they have over 200 students enrolled in traineeships in the Plastics Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package of which there are no trainees that report disabilities. In the past six years only two students in the plastics area have reported disabilities. There were described as minor physical disabilities.

Kangan also tries to attract students in the secondary system via the VTAC application process. To date not one student has accessed a plastics course via VTAC.

In regional Victoria the University of Ballarat delivers training in the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package in the rubber industry. There are approximately 150 trainees with one reporting a physical disability. The individual is missing some fingers as a result of an industrial accident and no reasonable adjustment is required.

Only one example of a person with disabilities enrolled in the Training Package was found

Other key players

The pathway for people with disabilities into the VET system and then into a program that will result in a Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package outcome is vast and complex. These include open and supported employment agencies, commonwealth, state and local government agencies and private organisations. A list of the organisations consulted is provided in the Appendix 4.

Representatives from these organisations were asked about their experiences with respect to how their organisation provides pathways for people with disabilities firstly into the VET system and then secondly into the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package. They were asked three specific questions: what works, what doesn't work and what is needed.

Each respondent expressed a commitment and a passion for improving the choices and quality of life for people with disabilities but expressed a mounting frustration at the complexity of the system they work within. Multiple government agencies, multiple funded programs, complex eligibility criteria and no central body of knowledge and support all adds to their confusion and hinders their efforts. Many respondents agreed that it was impossible, due to the size and complexity of the system, for any one service provider to understand all the options available. There was agreement that collaboration between the stakeholders is essential for a chance of a successful training or employment outcome. There was also concern that the move to a case based funding system as opposed to the block funding system will limit the ability of service providers to provide more services where they are needed.

Collaboration is the key to success

A summary of the comments and developments gathered in the consultations with key players follows.

Supported employment agencies

A metropolitan supported employment agency reported experience placing three people with disabilities in the rubber industry, and zero employees in the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry. All three were placed in general labouring job roles with appropriate workplace modifications to accommodate their needs. All three received on the job training but no formally recognised training outcome. One had the opportunity to access nationally accredited training but barriers were encountered.

This person had a short term memory problem and was given the opportunity to participate in the VET system in the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package through a traineeship. Prior to commencement of a traineeship there is a sign up process where a New Apprenticeship Centre facilitates the completion of the necessary paperwork in conjunction with the employer and the person to be trained. During the sign up the employer and the representative from the New Apprenticeship Centre determined that the short term memory problem meant

that the individual would not be able to cope with the training and the sign up process was terminated. The individual continued to work in the organisation.

Feedback from the employment agency stressed the importance of collaboration and communication between all players or the system just does not work. There also needs to be more information about how the various programs work and how they can best work together. For example if the individual is on a disability pension are they eligible to participate in a traineeship and what happens to their support payments? Answers to these sorts of questions are difficult to track down in a complex and disjointed system and sometimes payments can be suspended whilst the answer is debated.

The employment agency also reported a successful training project model in another industry, the furnishings industry. A training program was established where a public training provider delivered training in a supported workplace to AQF level II and provided the services of a disability support worker to assist the trainees.

Another supported employment agency reported that a relevant training outcome definitely leads to greater employment opportunities. They reported several obstacles with respect to finding employment for people with disabilities in the process manufacturing industry. This industry is perceived to be a shrinking industry with an increasing requirement for higher-level technical skills. This means less low skilled packing and assembling roles and fewer opportunities for people with disabilities. As people with disabilities often do not drive access to public transport is an important issue. This is more problematic in the process manufacturing industry because of the shift start and stop times and the location of the workplace relative to train stations and bus stops. Employers in the process manufacturing industry are resistant to employing people with disabilities because it might reveal the deficiencies in their occupational health and safety procedures or require complex and costly workplace modifications. The supported employment agency recommended the development of stronger links between supported employment agencies, ITABs and industry bodies to educate the industry about the benefits of employing and training people with disabilities.

The plastics, rubber and cabling industry has a poor reputation as a career choice

Supported employment services

A number of supported employment services were consulted. Case studies for Noble Enterprises, Merriwa and Brite Industries are included in this report. Brite Industries is the only supported employment service consulted that has progressed to Training Package outcomes. This is detailed in the case study.

All supported employment services consulted were excited about the prospect of offering nationally recognised VET outcomes to their employees. With the exception of Brite Industries their awareness of Training Packages and, in particular, the Training Package most relevant to their workplace was very low. They simply were not informed of the range of training programs available. Their awareness was limited to the current services their training provider was providing including fee for service short course programs, PEPT or the WELL Program. Supported employment services that had heard of New Apprenticeships did not think that they were relevant to their workplace, believing them to be too advanced, and were not aware of the New Apprenticeship Access Program. They also did not know that training providers now offer flexible delivery

options and that some providers will provide one on one on the job training delivery.

The awareness of pathway options for regional based supported employment services was particularly limited and when asked to list their options for training providers they could only name their local public provider. The local public provider was not active in delivering training against the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package.

Supported employment services are keen to participate in Training Packages

In their plans to create pathways for their employees supported employment services were considering becoming RTOs, partnering with public training providers and partnering with private training providers. Disability awareness of the training provider and the individual trainers was considered to be of critical importance.

Disability awareness of the training providers is a key requirement of supported employment services

Diversity@work

Diversity@work is a federally funded organisation based in Melbourne that helps companies develop and implement diversity in the workplace. They promote the benefits of employing people with disabilities to companies across all industries, of all sizes.

There are many programs and services to assist organisations and individuals in the disabilities sector but very few programs to assist employers with workplace diversity. Diversity@work recognise that it is often the discomfort of the people without the disabilities that hinder the workplace integration and work with the company to educate and inform the workforce. Disability awareness training is delivered to staff at all levels of the company. Companies with a positive record with respect to implementing diversity in the workplace were listed in the October 28th issue of The Age in the Good Reputation Index.

As there are over 140 supported employment agencies in Victoria, Diversity@work helps companies wishing to implement workplace diversity by screening job applicants using their expertise and experience to prevent mismatches between the individual and the company.

Disability awareness services to increase workplace diversity are available

Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS)

CRS Australia is the largest provider of rehabilitation and injury management services in Australia. Centrelink uses a Work Ability Tables assessment to refer most of CRS clients. Other clients may be referred by health professionals but still need to be assessed by Centrelink.

Consultants at CRS first determine whether a person is able to return to their former job. If they cannot return to their former job a CRS consultant will conduct

a vocational assessment. This assessment looks at the skills and attitudes of the individual and is not linked to any specific Training Package outcome.

Following the assessment suitable alternative job areas are identified and funding for training provided if appropriate. The training can include pre-apprenticeship training through to Certificate III training. The CRS reported successful examples of re-training in the automotive, printing and electronics industries but was not aware that training was available specific to the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry and therefore could give no examples. Traineeships are not a popular option because of the difficulty finding willing host employers. The CRS is expected to find host employers and greater assistance from New Apprenticeship Centres in finding the host employers would make traineeships a more desirable option.

Host employers for people with disabilities are difficult to find

The CRS collaborates with other services such as Disability Employment Agencies and Diversity@work to place and support individuals in employment. Support is available for both the individual and the workplace. An example of a woman placed in a packaging role in the process manufacturing industry was given. The CRS assessed her preferred learning style and determined how many tasks she could manage to learn and perform. CRS also worked with the employer to modify the workplace to accommodate the woman's needs.

The CRS have access to both the Wage Subsidy Scheme and the Work Training Scheme. They reported that the Work Training Scheme is easier to sell because the commitment is only for 13 weeks compared with the Wage Subsidy Scheme where the employer needs to commit to 26 weeks.

The CRS reported a higher success rate in finding employment for people with disabilities in smaller rather than larger companies. Smaller organisations have less employment opportunities and multiple placements with the one employer are rare. The CRS needs to be continuously looking for alternative employers and commented that a publicly available list of willing host employers in the process manufacturing industry would be helpful.

Finally the CRS reported that critical to the success of any placement and sometimes more important than the vocational skills, is the social setting of the workplace. If an individual cannot fit in as a team member then the placement has less chance of success.

A successful work placement is more dependent on the social setting of the workplace than the vocational skills of the individual

Health Outcomes International

The Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services has contracted Health Outcomes International to develop a wage assessment tool. This tool will look at the competency and productivity of people with disabilities in the workplace and make a judgement regarding appropriate payment levels. The aim of the tool is to create the same equity of pay as an individual under an award based system. Currently wages for people with disabilities can vary depending on the profitability and generosity of their employers.

The proposed assessment tool incorporates significant aspects of National Training Packages. Employees will be assessed every 12 months, every second year by an external assessor and every other year by an internal assessor.

The assessment covers eight competencies comprising five core competencies and three additional competencies from the relevant National Training Package. The five core competencies cover generic skills such as communications, safety and quality. The three additional competencies are job task orientated and probably AQF level II.

The intention is for the assessors to be qualified workplace assessors, have disability experience and be competent in using the new assessment tool.

Although the planned assessment process utilises National Training Packages and is delivered by qualified workplace assessors there is no intention for the individuals being assessed to be awarded a nationally recognised qualification or a certificate of attainment. The involvement of Registered Training Organisations would address this problem. Another issue is the currency of competencies. In the VET system there is no re-assessment of competency once a competency has been achieved.

The critical answer to opening up this new pathway is to create a link between the assessment tool development and implementation process and the VET system.

The Wage Assessment Tool could be a great RCC pathway

Centrelink

Several Centrelink Disability Officers from around Melbourne were consulted with respect to their experience in assisting people with disabilities.

Centrelink is in the process of expanding its focus by implementing services and programs that treat the needs of an individual more holistically. This includes providing social workers, psychologists and personal advisors. The personal advisors service is a new service that helps the client with their life issues rather than focusing on payment issues. Another new program is the Personal Support Program that helps people in difficult times who may be victims of homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness or domestic violence. Centrelink is recognising that to achieve a training or employment outcome other problems might need to be addressed first.

Centrelink Disability Officers commented on the benefits of preparatory skills training courses to provide life skills but expressed concerns for their capacity to provide meaningful vocational skills. They observed people with disabilities often participate in repeated preparatory skills training courses.

Centrelink Disability Officers also commented that the employment sector was lagging behind and needed to come on board with respect to disability awareness and equal opportunity for workplace integration to move forward.

Workplace integration is hindered by the employment sector's lack of disability awareness

Local Learning and Employment Networks

The Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) are an initiative of the Victorian Department of Education and Training. They bring together the expertise and experience of local education providers, industry, community organisations, individuals and government organisations to improve education, training and employment outcomes for 15 to 19 year olds. The LLENs are based largely on local government area boundaries.

New Apprenticeship Centres

New Apprenticeship Centres (NACs) reported observing very few trainees with disabilities across all industries and no trainees with disabilities in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry.

NACs did report examples of people with disabilities participating in traditional apprenticeships. One NAC reported assisting 65 people with disabilities of which 63 were engaged in traditional apprenticeships and only two were participating in traineeships. The main reason given for the preference of traditional apprenticeships was the difference in incentives available to employers.

In traditional apprenticeships employers have access to the Disabled Apprentice Wage Subsidy (DAWS) that provides a wage subsidy as well as tutorial assistance, mentoring assistance and workplace modifications. The only support available through the new apprenticeship scheme is an allowance for workplace modifications. There was support for the proposed introduction of DAWS to the New Apprenticeship Scheme.

Current traineeship incentives do not encourage enrollments of people with disabilities

There was also a low level of awareness about other government disability services and how they affect new apprenticeship eligibility leading to high levels of confusion and misconceptions.

NACs are required by contract to market traineeships. One NAC consulted had identified the process manufacturing industry as a target market opportunity. To assist their marketing one NAC was collaborating with relevant industry bodies, participating in relevant trade shows and had recruited someone with specific process manufacturing experience to lead the push into the process manufacturing industry. The main barrier that they had encountered was the limited number of RTOs and the limited numbers of industry trainers servicing the process manufacturing industry.

Enrollments are hindered by the lack of training providers and trainers

Group Training Companies

Group Training Companies reported a low level of interest from employers as the reason for their low level of activity in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry. They found that employers are more focused on looking for labourers and not considering the staff training and development possibilities.

One Group Training Company reported that they were not actively marketing to the Plastics, Rubber and Cabling industry because of difficulties finding and

recruiting industry trainers, the lack of training resources and the low levels of funding available. They were also limited by their traineeship cap. These are problems that affect the delivery Training Package outcomes to both people with and without disabilities.

There is a low demand from employers and a low supply of training providers, trainers and training resources

Identification of VET Pathways

From a marketing perspective training is simply a product for sale where people with disabilities are the customers and the plastics, rubber and cabling industry is the target market. Distribution of the product involves getting the training from the VET system to the individual. The distribution channels are the pathways.

The following section is a review of the availability and accessibility of 35 pathways that have been identified for people with disabilities. To gain a PMB01 qualification an individual must first find a pathway that leads them to the VET system and then they must find a pathway that leads them to the PMB01 qualification.

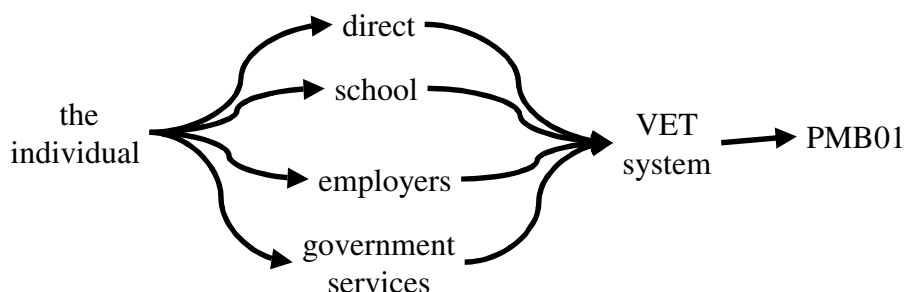


Figure 2: VET pathway approaches

Pathways leading to the VET System

There are four key approach pathways for people with disabilities to access training in the VET system.

The direct approach

Individuals can access the VET system directly by approaching a number of metropolitan and regional TAFEs that offer classroom and flexible training delivery options against the Plastics, Rubber and Cabling Training Package.

The direct approach includes calling a TAFE, attending an open day or responding to information posted on a website.

The likelihood of a person with disabilities directly approaching a TAFE is low and depends on the type of disability. For example a person with an intellectual disability may not have the confidence to initiate a direct approach and a person with a physical disability may.

Discussions with TAFE representatives suggest that few people access the VET system directly and that the likelihood of direct access by people with disabilities is even lower.

Currently there are no pathways available for individuals to access a Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package qualification directly from a private provider or an Adult Community Education (ACE) provider.

The school approach

1. VET in Schools

VET can be accessed through the school system via the VET in Schools program. This program allows secondary students to combine traditional classroom based learning with workplace learning.

Approval for VET in Schools programs is obtained via application to the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA).

In 2002, Manufacturing Learning Victoria (MLV), the Process Manufacturing Industry Training Advisory Board, presented an application to the VCAA demonstrating strong interest from eight schools willing to run a Certificate II PMB01 VET in Schools program and employers interested in hosting work placements.

The VACC did not provide approval for the program to go ahead explaining that the application did not satisfy two out of four criteria. The criteria met included "recognition of outcomes" and "connections". The criteria not satisfied included "pathways and opportunities" and "stakeholders and partnerships".

MLV is committed to continuing the drive in 2003 to convince either the VAAC or the State government that there is a need and benefit associated with opening the door to this pathway.

Currently there is no pathway available for individuals to access a Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking VET in schools program.

2. Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning

The new Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCA) provides Year 11 and 12 students with a pathway into VET as an alternative to the VCE, the pathway to university.

The VCAL, available to students in 200 secondary colleges, TAFEs and participating Adult Community Centres (ACE) in 2003, includes four compulsory strands: literacy and numeracy, industry specific skills, work related skills and personal development skills.

Two of these strands, industry specific skills and work related skills, require students to select units from the VET sector that equate to a minimum of 200 hours nominal training. Competencies from the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package can be delivered where there is student demand and the school has a relationship with a VET provider with PMB98 or PMB01 on their scope of registration.

The newly accredited Certificate II in Vocational Studies is a preparatory skills training course designed to be incorporated into VCAL. The course is accredited across sixteen different Training Packages including the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package. The qualifications streams available include injection moulding, blow moulding and extrusion. The aim of the course is to make students job ready and it is targeted towards people from disadvantaged groups including people with disabilities.

3. Part-time Apprenticeships in the VCE

The Part-time Apprenticeship for Secondary School Students program is open to students 15 years of age or over and involves the student undertaking their VCE as well as being employed and trained.

There are over 20 Part-time Apprenticeships approved for the VCE. The list does not include qualifications from the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package.

4. Careers advisors, teachers, parents and other influencers

Individuals may be led to the VET system by their teachers, careers advisors, family, friends and acquaintances.

A recent study (Molenaar, 2002) found that careers advisors, teachers and parents have a limited understanding of the plastics, rubber and Cablemaking industry and career opportunities and generally lack confidence in providing advice about the industry as a career choice. They also were found to have a limited understanding and awareness of apprenticeships and the VET system.

As part of the Australians Working Together (AWT) package funding will be provided to improve service coordination for people with disabilities with the aim of increasing their participation and outcomes in education and transitions to employment. The funding establishes a Disability Coordination Officer (DCO) to provide information, co-ordination and referral for people with disabilities interested in or enrolled in post-school education and training.

The DCO's responsibilities will include advice on all education and employment options and it is unlikely that the benefits gained for people with disabilities will result in higher participation rates in the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package unless the individuals have a background in the industry themselves.

5. Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre

The Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) is a private organisation acting on behalf of participating training providers to facilitate and co-ordinate the joint selection system where school students apply for entry to further education.

VTAC represents over 20 TAFE institutions including those that have the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package on their scope. However the VTAC guide does not include qualifications from the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry.

The employer approach

There are a number of pathways available for individuals to access the VET system through the employment system. These include:

1. Open employment enterprise based RTOs

Individuals employed in an open employment enterprise based RTO may participate in training against the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package.

There are two open employment RTOs registered for the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package in Victoria, Mend-A-Bathroom and

Cryovac. Both these organisations are focused on the training of their own workforce.

Cryovac employs more than 700 staff and the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package is relevant to approximately 350 staff across two manufacturing sites. Whilst a couple of employees are accessing Workcover, there are no employees currently reporting a disability.

Mend-A-Bathroom is a newly registered RTO and has not commenced training.

The employer approach pathway to the VET system via open employment enterprise based RTOs is available but unless employers employ people with disabilities, the pathway will not be accessed.

2. Supported employment enterprise based RTOs

Individuals employed in a supported employment enterprise based RTO may participate in training against the Rubber Plastics and Cablemaking Training Package.

There is one supported employment RTO registered for the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package in Victoria, Brite Industries. A case study on the practices and experiences of Brite Industries is presented in this paper.

This pathway is available in and is being accessed with successful outcomes recorded.

3. Open employment enterprises

Individuals employed in open employment in the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry can access the VET system through their employer.

The employer can access a number of work based training programs available through the VET system.

Participation in the VET system depends on:

- The employer knowing what training programs are available
- The employer's willingness to implement an accredited training program
- The employer's willingness to make the training program available to workers with disabilities
- The availability of an RTO to deliver the service
- The willingness of an RTO to deliver the service to people with disabilities
- The availability of industry trainers to deliver a PMB01 qualification
- The availability of industry trainers with disability awareness
- The support of the parent/guardian.

This pathway is potentially available to all workers in the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry. The recent introduction of private training providers in this market has helped to educate employers about the training programs and flexible delivery options available. Further marketing of training programs, increasing flexibility of training providers

and encouragement of learning cultures will further assist the opening of this pathway.

4. Supported employment services

Individuals employed in supported employment in the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry access the VET system via their employers. As with open employment enterprises participation in the VET system depends on:

- The employer knowing what training programs are available
- The employer's willingness to implement an accredited training program
- The employer's willingness to make the training program available to workers with disabilities
- The availability of an RTO to deliver the service
- The willingness of an RTO to deliver the service to people with disabilities
- The availability of industry trainers to deliver a PMB01 qualification
- The availability of industry trainers with disability awareness
- The support of the parent/guardian.

This pathway is potentially available to all workers in the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry in supported employment. However it is not being accessed.

Employers in supported employment need to be confident that the VET system can provide the necessary support and expertise required to train people with disabilities. Collaboration with training providers willing to assist the organisation can open this pathway and build both confidence and self-sufficiency. Training providers can help by equipping staff with workplace trainer and assessor skills. These staff who have the industry, VET and disability skills and knowledge can then deliver the training and assessments.

Employers in supported employment may not be aware of the existence of Training Packages and training programs. Many functions that are performed in supported manufacturing employment environment are downstream finishing activities such as packing and assembly and are covered by competencies in PMB01. Workers engaged in these activities could be involved in the VET system and gain nationally recognised qualifications for the skills they can demonstrate.

5. Group Training Companies

Group Training Companies employ apprentices and trainees and then place them with host employers. Some Group Training Companies are also RTOs. Group Training Companies registered for PMB01 or PMB98 include Apprentices-Trainees-Employment Ltd, Newskills Ltd and Northern Group Training. All three organisations report no trainees with disabilities enrolled in the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package.

Newskills reports a low level of activity in the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package and nil people reporting disabilities.

Northern Group Training has only recently gained scope of registration for the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package and has no people reporting disabilities enrolled.

Apprentices-Trainees-Employment Ltd is based in Wodonga and was previously involved in delivering training against the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package for a client in regional NSW. They currently deliver training to people with disabilities but not in the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry.

The pathway via Group Training Companies is available and is under-accessed possibly due to lack of business initiative and application in the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry. This pathway may be opened further by simply marketing the benefits to Group Training Companies and providing information and networking support.

6. Skills Assessment Program

The Skills Assessment Program is a specialised program developed and delivered by MLV) and funded by Small Business Victoria. The program subsidises the cost of workplace assessors with industry specific process manufacturing skills conduct competency based assessments in the workplace. The competencies are nationally accredited and qualifications and certificates of attainment are provided to participants on completion through MLV, an RTO.

The Skills Assessment Program is a very successful program that has been accessed by both open and supported employment. An example of the program providing a pathway for people with disabilities to access the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package is provided in the Brite Industries case study.

The government service approach

As part of the Australians Working Together package the Commonwealth Government is introducing a range of new and upgraded programs to assist people with disabilities participate in employment, training and the community.

Centrelink is a government agency delivering payments and services on behalf of 10 client government departments, three of which offer services specific to people with disabilities that assist them gain access to vocational education and training and employment.

The Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) is responsible for Australian social policy issues provides income support, housing policy, community support, disability services, child care services and family issues, including family payments, child support and family relationships.

The Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business (DEWRSB) is responsible for supporting strong employment growth and the improved productive performance of enterprises in Australia.

The Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) is responsible for helping all Australians achieve in a learning society.

Centrelink assesses the appropriate level of support for a job seeker using the Work Ability Tables (WATs).

WATs measure the impact of a disability upon ability to work and the higher the score the greater the assistance required. Individuals with scores of less than 50 are referred to the Job Network and individuals with scores of 50 or greater are referred to the CRS or Disability Employment Services

Programs available through Centrelink can provide a pathway to vocational education and training in the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package.

1. Employment agencies

Competitive Employment Training and Placement (CETP) services assist people with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment in open employment. Training and support in CETP is intensive to start with, and then gradually reduces as the person becomes more confident and efficient at a job. When the person can perform a job without constant support, contact and follow up still continue for some time.

This initiative is designed to assist approximately 16,000 new job seekers with disabilities around Australia over three years, commencing in September 2002, at a cost of approximately \$102 million.

2. Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service

The Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS) is a service available to assist workers with disabilities, injury or health problems to return to work. Professional staff work with the employee, their doctor and employers to provide services such as return to work programs, job training, job placement, vocational assessments and job design advice.

3. Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service Work Training Scheme

The Work Training Scheme places people with disabilities in work training for up to a 13-week period. The individual gains valuable current work skills whilst employers have the opportunity to train an individual to the required industry standards and to observe the person's suitability for this type of work.

4. Job Network

Job Network is a nationwide network of community and government organisations contracted by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWSB) that aim to assist, motivate and monitor job seeker efforts to find work. These organisations give advice about general government employment and training assistance and may provide the services of a Disability Support Officer. Employment services and NACs are members of the Job Network.

5. Centrelink Disability Officers

Each Centrelink office employs Centrelink Disability Officers who are responsible for helping people with disabilities access services and be assessed for job readiness. If a client is assessed as not being able to work for a minimum of 8 hours a week then they are considered not job ready and channelled into a program such as the Personal Support Programme. If they are considered job ready then they are directed into another program or employment outcome.

The pathway from a Centrelink Disability Officer to the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package is dependent on the availability of employment and training options in the local area. It is also dependent on

the Disability Officer's awareness of these services and their level of comfort in referring people to the plastics, rubber and cabling industry.

6. Wage Subsidy Scheme

The Wage Subsidy Scheme (WSS) is provided to the specialist employment agencies by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services to encourage employers to provide jobs for people with disabilities. Wage subsidies are available for a range of employment situations for a maximum period of 13 weeks. Employers receiving a subsidy must make every effort for the position to result in ongoing employment of at least three months after the subsidy ends.

Stakeholder discussions identified this government service as a positive tool particularly for people with disabilities who need help to get a start and may lead to continued employment and VET outcomes.

7. Supported Wage System

The Supported Wage System (SWS) is a productivity based wage assessment that is available to assist people with disabilities participate in open employment when their disability affects their workplace productivity.

Stakeholder discussions identified this government service as a positive tool for encouraging the employment of people with disabilities and may lead to a VET outcome through the employer.

8. Personal Support Programme

The Personal Support Programme (PSP) assists with special help if a person is experiencing a problem like homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, mental illness and domestic violence. Personal providers help PSP participants to work towards economic or social outcomes. Social outcomes may include stabilised circumstances, increased community engagement, improved life skills, stable accommodation, increased self-esteem/confidence and accessing mental health services. Economic outcomes may include transferring to work programs, study and/or vocational training.

This is a new program and therefore could not be assessed with respect to its effectiveness of providing a pathway to the Plastics Rubber and Cabling Training Package.

9. Transition to work

Transition to Work offers practical help and funding for training to help participants develop their skills. The package includes activities such as help with writing a resume or job application; courses to up-grade skills and career counselling. The service is free and people don't have to be on income support to be eligible.

This is a new program and therefore could not be assessed with respect to its effectiveness of providing a pathway to the Plastics Rubber and Cabling Training Package.

10. Training Credits

As of July 2002 the Commonwealth Government pays \$500, \$650 or \$800 for accredited training for jobseekers who successfully exit Work for the Dole and Community Work after completing minimum participation

requirements. A range of courses relevant to the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking industry are registered with this program.

This is a new program and therefore could not be assessed with respect to its effectiveness of providing a pathway to the Plastics Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package.

11. Language, Literacy and Numeracy Supplement

This supplement offers an extra \$20.80 per fortnight to help meet the incidental costs associated with undertaking approved language, literacy and numeracy training courses. This program was introduced September 2002.

This is a new program and therefore could not be assessed with respect to its effectiveness of providing a pathway to the Plastics Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package.

12. Jobs Pathway Programme

The Jobs Pathway Programme (JPP) helps young people who have left school, or are thinking about leaving school, to find work, further education or training. JPP aims to stop young people becoming unemployed by offering all sorts of services and advice.

Stakeholder discussions commented that the JPP would provide more meaningful support for people with disabilities if it were mandatory to register. They reported that unfortunately the JPP misses people with disabilities as a target group.

13. New Apprenticeship Centres

New Apprenticeship Centres (NACs) are contracted by the DEST as part of the Job Network to provide information and assistance on all aspects of the New Apprenticeship Scheme.

NACs can influence pathways into the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package through the quality of the advice that they give individuals, RTOs and employers and their involvement at the traineeship sign up.

14. Career Counselling

Centrelink offers job seekers a free career counselling service to help them make decisions about employment and training.

15. Career Information Centre

Centrelink Career Information Centres contain printed, video and computer based information to help people make decisions about employment and training. In Victoria there are two Career Information Centres located in Richmond and Geelong.

16. Futures for Young Adults Program

Futures for Young Adults is a joint initiative of the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Education, Employment and Training (DEET). It supports students with disabilities, aged 18 years or over, to move from school to adult options including VET and university placements, employment on the open labour market, programs provided by employment services and community based day programs.

Public providers reported that many students in preparatory skills training courses are participants in the Futures for Young Adults program.

Therefore this program is successful in leading people with disabilities to the VET system.

This is a potential pathway if the preparatory skills training courses are linked to the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package.

Pathways within the VET System

Once the pathway has led the individual to the VET system there are a number of pathway options available within the VET system. RTOs must comply with the Australian Quality Training Framework standards.

1. Preparatory skills training courses

Preparatory skills training courses describe the lower level preparatory and prevocational courses in the VET sector, AQF level I and lower. These courses are designed to prepare people for vocational education and training, employment or community participation. Examples of preparatory skills training courses include language, literacy and numeracy, job skills and workplace knowledge, study skills and prevocational tasters

2. New Apprenticeship Scheme

The New Apprenticeship Scheme is an umbrella term for the national apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements that came into effect on 1st January 1998. The New Apprenticeship Scheme provides trainees with skills required in the workplace. The training delivered against a Training Package provides a nationally recognised qualification with links into further qualifications. The New Apprenticeship Scheme has recently been reviewed and significant changes will be introduced July 2003.

Assistance for New Apprentices with disabilities is currently limited to apprentices, with the exception of workplace modifications that are also available for trainees. From 1 July 2003, all elements of the assistance currently available for apprentices will also be available for trainees. This includes the Disabled Apprentice Wage Support (DAWS) that is paid as a wage subsidy of \$114.73 per week. Other DAWS associated assistance, such as tutoring and mentoring (up to \$5500) and interpreting (up to \$5500) assistance will also be available to assist trainees.

The structure of the incentive payments is also being changed. Currently the \$4400 incentive is divided into three staged payments made on commencement (\$1375), progression (\$1375) and completion (\$1650) of a Certificate III traineeship. The new incentive payment system also totaling \$4400 will be based on two payments comprising \$1650 for commencement and \$2750 for completion of a Certificate III.

Traineeships commencing Certificate II and not completing will attract an incentive payment of \$1375 only.

The plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry is considered a skills shortage area and therefore the Commonwealth government supports the training of existing workers and will continue this support in the revised New Apprenticeship Scheme.

Stakeholders reported that the planned changes to the New Apprenticeship Scheme will have a positive impact on opening the pathway for people with disabilities to access traineeships across all industries.

3. New Apprenticeship Access Program

The New Apprenticeships Access Program (NAAP) provides job seekers who experience barriers to skilled employment, with pre-vocational training, support and assistance to obtain and maintain a New Apprenticeship. Alternatively, a job seeker may be supported into employment, further education or training.

The New Apprenticeship Access Program funded is accessed by RTOs through brokers contracted by DEST. The funding is not industry specific and is based on participant numbers. RTOs advertise and recruit job seekers who have been assessed by Centrelink as meeting the eligibility requirements. The training program must deliver training that assists the participants to participate in the New Apprenticeship Scheme. Preparatory skills training courses can be delivered through the Access Program.

The program is incentive based and RTOs are paid an incentive for participants who move into a New Apprenticeship and a significantly lesser incentive for participants who move into employment or other training. If there is no demonstrated outcome the RTO may breakeven.

None of the Training Providers consulted were delivering the New Apprenticeships Access Program to people with disabilities in the plastics, rubber and cabling industries.

4. Recognition of Prior Learning and Recognition of Current Competencies

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC) is based on the awareness that people learn through work experience and life experience as well as through education and training. RPL/RCC takes into account a person's skills and experiences to enable a person to get credit in a course of study.

5. Profile Funding

Profile funding is a pool of funded hours available to public providers to deliver training. Each TAFE applies for and is allocated profile hours according to AQF level, industry and geographic location of delivery.

6. Priority Education and Training Program

The Priority Education and Training Program (PETP) is administered by the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) on behalf of the Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission (VLESC). The program purchases training to be delivered in Victoria by eligible RTOs. TAFEs and Adult and Community Education Providers are not eligible to apply.

The funding is accessed by private RTOs via a Purchase Schedule that identifies the perceived training needs by industry sector and geographic region. In 2003 the program includes \$1 million in training for the benefit of people with disabilities across all industries. This includes \$252,000 for vocational programs in non-metropolitan areas and \$420,000 for vocational programs in metropolitan areas. In addition there is \$272,000 for preparatory courses and \$60,500 for training teachers and trainers to work with people with disabilities.

PETP funding provides pathways specifically designed to help people with disabilities to access the VET system because a proportional of the funding is specifically targeted to people with disabilities. Whether the

funding will find its way to the plastics, rubber and cabling Industry is not known.

7. **Workplace English Language and Literacy Program**

The Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL) funds workplace communications training integrated with vocational training to help workers meet their current and future employment and training needs. Training and assessments against the Plastics, Rubber and Cabling Training Package can be delivered through a WELL Program. It is a requirement of the WELL Program that the participants are not also participating in a New Apprenticeship.

Collaboration

Previous studies (Harrison 2000) highlight the problem that many services designed to support participation in vocational education and training are duplicated and fragmented. Changes such as the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act, the implementation of the Bridging Pathways Blueprint, budget constraints and welfare reform is forcing collaboration between the different sectors and service providers.

Examples of collaboration in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry are evidenced in the case studies and consultations with training providers and other stakeholders.

Examples outside the plastics, rubber and cabling industry include the very successful Waves-Email Lighthouse Project targeted at secondary students with disabilities. In 2000 the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation allocated \$140,000 to support three innovative "lighthouse" projects to increase structured workplace learning opportunities for people with disabilities.

The three projects were:

Work-Out Project

This NSW project involved partnerships between Central Coast Business Education Network (CCBEN), schools and RTOs to assist the transition from school to training to employment.

GATE Project

This Tasmanian project established links between businesses, schools and CEPT agencies to build on and extend the linkages. The project aimed to assist students with disabilities become work ready and identify and facilitate the VET access to VET pathways.

The Waves Project

This South Australian project involved a partnership between Western Adelaide Vocational Enterprise Services (WAVES), two CEPTs – Personnel Employment and MJP and two RTOs Email Training Services and Maxima Training Services. In 2000 and 2001, a group of young students with disabilities participated in pre-vocational training and a Certificate I in retail or engineering and manufacturing with the aim of progressing to job placement and a new apprenticeship.

Case Studies

Brite Industries

Introduction

Brite Industries is located in metropolitan Melbourne and provides employment and training for people with disabilities and people who are disadvantaged.

There are three main operating divisions:

- Brite Pak is a transitional service that provides training and employment in plastics and packaging. Services include shrink-wrapping, skin packing and blister sealing
- Brite Plants is a wholesale and retail nursery that provides training and employment in horticulture
- Brite Institute is the education and vocational training division of the Victorian Vocational Rehabilitation Association and is a Registered Training Organisation.

Narrative

Brite Pak and Brite Plants are located in Broadmeadows and employ 130 people with disabilities. There are 30 people employed by Brite Plants and 100 people employed by Brite Pak.

Employees are sourced from special and mainstream schools, doctor referrals, DHS referrals and word of mouth from carers, parents and associations. Not one employee has been sourced from Centrelink.

The employee catchment areas for Brite Industries includes a wide area including Craigieburn, Sunbury, Tullamarine, Keilor and Brunswick and Brite Industries has employed over 1000 people and retains 5% per year. Since 1985 more than 80 people have been placed in open employment and many have returned to Brite Industries. Brite Industries also has strategic alliances with schools and centres. People with disabilities are encouraged to use Brite as a taster.

Mike Alcock is the Chief Executive Officer and first became aware of the benefits of Training Packages for Brite Pak when he heard about the Skills Assessment Program. In 2000 Brite Industries partnered with MLV to conduct workplace assessments through the Business Victoria subsidised Skills Assessment Program. Trained assessors from the process manufacturing industry perform workplace assessments against the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package.

Eighty-eight people with disabilities took part in the program and were assessed at AQF level II competencies in conjunction with the Team Leaders. Ninety-four people achieved four competencies, 17 people achieved five competencies, 15 people achieved 6 competencies and 7 people achieved seven competencies. The skills assessment process was a validating experience for Brite Industries as their employees were assessed from an able bodied perspective with successful outcomes.

Brite Skills delivers the Certificate I in Employment Preparation, a 12-month pre-employment course developed by Brite Industries in 1996 that is specifically designed for people with special needs who wish to go on to employment and/or training.

The course content includes both classroom training and practical placement and the units are

- Induction (12 hours)
- Introduction to Study (12 hours)
- Personal Development (40 hours)
- Workplace Communication (20 hours)
- Workplace Numeracy (40 hours)
- Occupational Health and Safety (46 hours)
- Work Preparation (30 hours)

The practical placement of 144 hours takes place at Brite Pak and Brite Plants and provides participants with an experience of the workplace. The program is funded through ACFE (Adult, Community and Further Education Board) funding and participants pay \$50 to participate. Brite Industries has not accessed alternative funding sources.

After completing the Certificate I in Employment Preparation an individual may be offered a place at Brite Industries or may be given counselling on the TAFE and career options available. There is definitely a clear pathway at Brite Industries for people with disabilities to progress from the Certificate I in Employment Preparation to employment at Brite Pak or Brite Plants.

People with disabilities who are more mature and already have work experience may commence employment directly without participating in the pre employment program. All employees are given on the job training delivered by the Operations Manager, a qualified trainer and assessor, and the Team Leaders who are qualified trainers.

Brite Industries prides itself on being a transitional training enterprise that creates choices for both people with disabilities and people who are disadvantaged. All employees have the option of staying in supported employment or moving into open employment.

An example of how people who are disadvantaged have been helped by Brite Industries is demonstrated by the City of Hume initiative called the Employability for Life Program. People who are disadvantaged are given the opportunity of life skills training and work placement along side people with disabilities. The program has been very successful in helping people who are disadvantaged because they develop an appreciation of their "able bodied-ness" whilst working in a positive and non-judgemental work environment.

Issues highlighted by Mike include:

- Today there are more and more people with disabilities attending mainstream schools that are not equipped to accommodate the special needs. The teachers do not have special skills, the integration aids do not have the time and the other children are not given training and support in how to be supportive of people with disabilities
- The New Apprenticeship Program is limited because it is aimed at Certificate III completion level and out of the reach of many employees at Brite Industries
- There is insufficient funding available for job coaching for people who move from supported employment to open employment. It is not enough to provide people with disabilities with skills and a positive work placement

experience in a supported environment. They need assistance with transporting those skills to the open environment and they need a positive experience in an open employment environment.

Observations and issues raised

- Not all people with disabilities are suited to making the transition from a supported workplace to an open workplace. Supported employment is a legitimate outcome in its own right
- The New Apprenticeship Program is aimed too high for many people with disabilities and the job functions that they perform. A Certificate I and II outcome is a legitimate outcome with respect to meeting a skill need
- A preparatory skills training course that includes a positive workplace experience creates a clear pathway between training and employment
- RPL/RCC is an effective way for people with disabilities to have the skills they have developed recognised and the Skills Assessment Program is an effective pathway to facilitate RPL/RCC in process manufacturing
- The skills that people with disabilities acquire in a supported environment are comparable with the skills of able bodied people as evidenced by the skills assessment outcomes
- It is important that people with disabilities be supported during the transition from supported employment to open employment. Crucial to the success of the transition is the environment of the host employer.

Noble Enterprises

Introduction

Nobel Enterprises is the manufacturing section of the Registered Training Organisation, Central Access, located in Benalla, regional Victoria. Central Access provides residential and day services for people with disabilities and also operates three commercial businesses, Central Access Vanities, Central Access Kitchens and Doors and Noble Enterprises.

Narrative

Noble Enterprises employs 25 people with disabilities conducting cabling assembly activities for a local transformer client. Lloyd is the Team Leader and responsible for the day-to-day operation of the facility.

Individuals at Noble Enterprises are sourced from carers and advocates, off the street, mainstream schools via the integration aid and open employment services. Occasionally Centrelink refers someone. No one has been sourced from a preparatory skills training course either from Central Access or another training provider.

Lloyd is interested in gaining nationally accredited training for his staff but is not aware of the options or incentives that are available.

Currently Noble Enterprises is participating in a WELL Program through Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE to further develop existing training materials and assist with the delivery of Workplace Trainer and Assessor.

Vocational training is delivered in-house and is organised around the Wage Assessment Tool. This tool lists all the skills and behaviours that need to be demonstrated in the workplace and provide space for each item to be assessed as competent with comments.

Central Access's scope of registration covers a range of preparatory skills training courses and Training Package qualifications:

- Certificate I in Horticulture (Floriculture) VIC
- Certificate II in Horticulture (Floriculture) VIC
- Certificate II in Manufactured Mineral Products VIC
- Certificate I in Employment Preparation VIC
- Certificate I in General Education for Adults VIC
- Certificate I in General Education for Adults (Foundation) VIC
- Certificate I in General Education for Adults (Introductory) VIC
- Certificate I in Initial Adult Literacy & Numeracy VIC
- Certificate I in Initial Adult Literacy & Numeracy (Foundation) VIC
- Certificate I in Work Education VIC
- Certificate II in General Education for Adults VIC
- Certificate II in General Education for Adults VIC
- Certificate II in General Education for Adults (Further Study) VIC
- Certificate III in General Education for Adults VIC
- Course in Developing Skills For Re-Entry to the Workforce VIC

- Course in Planning for Employment and Training VIC
- Course in Work Futures for Young Adults VIC

Central Access is considering adding PMB01 to its scope of registration or partnering with another RTO to offer accredited training to their process manufacturing employees. Central Access is interested in accredited training is because of the potential to create a link between the Wage Assessment process and the VET processes.

Central Access has identified numeracy and literacy as the major skills areas that need to be addressed to facilitate a pathway for people with disabilities into Training Package qualifications. They identify the lack of clear pathway between preparatory skills training courses and the schools system as a major barrier to access to Training Packages for people with disabilities.

Issues raised by Lloyd include:

- The pathway from Centrelink to a supported employment outcome is limited by the fact that Centrelink is unable to make recommendations. Centrelink sends choice letters to their clients that list all the options available.
- The pathway from Centrelink to supported employment is further limited by the prejudices that exist within our society. The supported employment option is considered less desirable than the open employment option even though it may be more suitable for the individual.
- The transition between supported employment and open employment is tough on the individual and there is a high return rate. The success of the transition is highly dependent on the host site. The vocational skills of the individual play a lesser role.
- Noble Enterprises provides employment for people with disabilities and there is an expectation that they find their own way to and from their place of employment whether by taxi, bus, bike or walking. Access to the workplace and place of training is an access issue for people with disabilities.

Observations and issues raised

- There is no link between the local training providers that provide preparatory skills training courses and Noble Enterprises as a vocational outcome. Potential exists for opening a pathway and also developing a closer relationship that facilitates work placements during training
- The potential for a link between the Wage Assessment Tool and the VET process has been identified and is a major incentive for the organisation to become involved in Training Packages
- There is a lack of a clear pathway between the school system, preparatory skills training courses and Training Package qualifications. A preparatory skills training course that clearly bridged this gap would help the transition
- There is an opportunity for Centrelink to be a more active player in recommending supported employment outcomes where it is the best option
- Prejudices that exist in general society towards people with disabilities exist within the disabilities community and may block access to services for people with disabilities
- Accommodating the needs of people with disabilities includes consideration for the way in which they get to and from training

- The success of training and employment of people with disabilities is as much a factor of the support the person with disabilities receives as it is about the attitudes and behaviours of the people with whom they interact.

Merriwa Industries

Introduction

Merriwa Industries is located in Wangaratta, regional Victoria and offers employment to people with disabilities in timber processing/assembly and packing/collation services. Merriwa Industries is an important example of a commercially successful enterprise where people with and without disabilities work along side each other. Merriwa Industries also provides a group home for children with disabilities.

Narrative

The timber processing and assembly site employs 60 process workers and 10 administration staff. Of the 60 process workers 20 are able bodied and 20 have disabilities. The site produces a range of timber based products and specialises in timber wine boxes for the local and export markets. Other products include pallets and noggings.

The packing and collation services site employs 110 people across two shifts of which over 35 employees have disabilities. The site provides a range of packing services for the local market.

Employees at both manufacturing sites are sourced via Centrelink referrals, open and supported employment services and off the street. None of the workforce is directly sourced from preparatory skills training courses.

Yvette and Arthur are responsible for the day to day operation of the business. They use the term “productivity” skills training to describe production type skills and “competency” skills training to describe soft skills reflecting the language of the Wage Assessment process. At Merriwa Industries training is delivered both in-house and sourced externally.

In-house training is delivered in machine skills and assembly skills by the three to four supervisors at each site. These supervisors are in the process of completing their Workplace Trainer and Assessor qualification. Each production process area at Merriwa industries has a Workplace Training and Assessment Form that details the task areas such as OHS requirements, machine preparation, material preparation, machine operation and the range of variables. Each task area is then further divided into the detailed requirements. The internal assessor uses these forms to assess the skills of the operators and give them a competency score.

Issues highlighted by Yvette’s and Arthur’s experience with respect to delivering in-house vocational training to people with disabilities include:

- The individuals responsible for training people with disabilities need to be trained in disability awareness to ensure that they are inclusive in their approach and provide special consideration where needed. Special consideration might include more time and simplified language.
- The inclusiveness of the workplace and the training environment is very important. For example Merriwa Industries is very confident that their full time employees without disabilities are very considerate and respectful to the people with disabilities that they work beside. However often Merriwa needs to employ casual labour to meet production demand and the contrast between the behaviour and attitude of the full time employees and the casuals is very obvious. The casuals are not as tolerant or as helpful as the employees.

External training is delivered by a range of local public and private providers and includes OHS, First Aid, Management Training and Forklift training. The OHS training covers areas such as Manual Handling and Dangerous Goods and the outcome is a Certificate of Attendance rather than a Training Package outcome even though there are competencies to cover the skills areas.

There is also currently a WELL program in progress being delivered by the local public provider, Goulburn Ovens TAFE. This project is assisting with procedure development and supporting the workplace trainers and assessors.

Merriwa Industries is looking at becoming a RTO next year so that they can deliver nationally accredited training to their employees. They know that Training Packages exist and that funding for training is available but are not fully informed about the choices available and how to evaluate those choices to select the product and provider to suit their organisation's needs.

Observations and issues raised

- The Workplace Training Assessment Form is similar in structure and content to a competency standard, though not as comprehensive. Combining the two systems into a single system that satisfies the requirements of Wage Assessment whilst meeting the needs of the VET system would have many advantages including creating efficiencies for the individual, the enterprise and the RTO, minimise the need for the individual to undergo the stress of another assessment and introduce the opportunity for RCC/RPL based on evidence gathered during the Wage Assessment process
- The language of the Wage Assessment process and the VET system are different and yet dangerously close enough to be confusing for people trying to work with both systems simultaneously
- There is no link between the local training providers that provide preparatory skills training courses and Merriwa Industries as a vocational outcome. Potential exists for opening a pathway and also developing a closer relationship that facilitates work placements during training
- The success of training and employment of people with disabilities is as much a factor of the support the person with disabilities receives as it is about the attitudes and behaviours of the people without disabilities with whom they interact
- Unaccredited training is being delivered by external providers that does not open the door to Training Packages and encourage further progression towards a qualification
- Staff at Merriwa Industries are not well informed about the training pathways available and how to select the best training option for their organisation.

Discussion

The Bridging Pathways Blueprint for Implementation specifies the actions required to achieve an inclusive VET system for people with disabilities. It builds on the areas of focus and strategies identified in the Bridging Pathways National Strategy and details with clear timeframes and responsibilities what needs to be achieved.

The pathways area of focus is supported by seven strategies. The objective of these strategies is to improve the pathways for people with disabilities into the VET system. The following section is a discussion of each of these strategies in relation to the qualitative and quantitative data gathered for this paper specific to the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package.

Facilitate preparatory skills training in National and State/Territory planning funding frameworks

The four actions identified in the Bridging Pathways Blueprint for Implementation that address this strategy are:

1. *Build priorities into State/Territory VET Plans for Enabling skills (basic work and life skills training that provide a pathway into further training) Preparatory and Pre-vocational Courses and AQF Certificate I and II*
2. *Encourage the provision of specifically designed prevocational training opportunities to some groups of people with a disability in order to address education or life experience disadvantage. Ensure the development of appropriate funding and reporting arrangements. These opportunities may include training that is not industry-specific and/or not aligned to the AQF*
3. *Review pathways for people with a disability into existing preparatory skills training programs (including the New Apprenticeships Access Program) and Skills Programs on into further training or employment. The review to include assessment models and assessment agencies*
4. *Ensure appropriate articulation arrangements are in place for the recognition of competency achieved through the completion of training courses and other development of skills to provide a pathway into training that is aligned to the AQF.*

NCVER statistics and consultations with training providers and other key stakeholders confirm that people with disabilities are accessing preparatory skills training programs. For example in 2001, 45.1% of people enrolled in the Certificate I in Work Education reported disabilities, a participation rate significantly higher than the total VET participation rate of 4.5% and significantly higher than the proportion of people with disabilities in the general population. Regionally based service providers did express concerns for the limited accessibility of preparatory skills training courses in rural areas.

The pathway to preparatory skills training courses is mainly facilitated through referrals from Centrelink Disability Officers, the Futures for Young Adults Program, referrals from special and mainstream schools and referrals from the Department of Human Services.

Research questions the effectiveness of preparatory skills training courses to provide meaningful outcomes. The research found that people with

disabilities don't progress to higher AQF levels and 57% actually enrol in a similar preparatory skills training course again. Discussions with TAFE Disability Liaison Officers, Disability Employment Services and Centrelink Disability Officers supported these findings.

Training providers, and in particular public training providers, offer a plethora of preparatory skills training courses. The options are complex, disconnected and not in sync with ANTA's objective to have a single, national training system.

Representatives from public training providers consulted demonstrated a low awareness of Training Packages or the industry based training services their institutions provide. Preparatory skills training courses, despite their objective, are not demonstrating transitional outcomes and are not leading people with disabilities to employment or training outcomes. People are accessing these courses but they are not progressing.

This does not mean that preparatory skills training courses cannot or do not have the potential to lead to training and employment outcomes.

A positive example in the plastics industry is presented in the Brite Industries case study. At Brite Industries the preparatory skills training course is specifically focused on training people for employment including a 144 hour practical placement in the workplace. Including a positive and significant workplace experience in the training program is extremely worthwhile. After completing the training support is provided to assist individuals with employment and training options. The emphasis at Brite Industries is on creating choices and facilitating the transition process.

An example of the potential of how preparatory skills training courses could lead to positive outcomes in the plastics industry is demonstrated in Chisholm Institute of TAFE's taster program. At Chisholm students with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in a series of taster modules across many different areas including the plastics industry. The pathway is limited because it relies on the coordinators being able to determine in their students a preference for the plastics industry and then meet the minimum class size requirement of 14 participants. An opportunity exists to further develop this concept to increase flexibility, market certain industries, incorporate real work placements and provide Training Package competency outcomes.

In both these examples the training does not include Training Package outcomes although the participants are receiving vocational training and, in the example at Brite Industries, work experience.

Opportunities exist to review, rationalise and update the existing preparatory skills training courses and link them to Training Packages. This is not only limited to the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package but also relevant across the board. The creation of a clearly defined link, with articulated pathways, is needed to facilitate the transition from preparatory skills training courses to Training Packages.

An example of a preparatory skills training program that is strongly tied to achieving Training Package outcomes is the New Apprenticeships Access Program. Training Providers delivering the program are paid according to outcomes achieved and there is a strong incentive to encourage participants to progress to the New Apprenticeship Program. None of the Training Providers consulted were delivering the New Apprenticeships Access Program to people with disabilities in the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industries suggesting that a significant opportunity exists to open this pathway.

Another pathway opportunity not being realised in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry is the PEPT funding which allocates \$1 million to training for people with disabilities in 2003. The funding is not industry specific and could be channelled into the plastics, rubber and cabling industry if demand could be demonstrated to the private training providers.

Directing training providers to deliver their New Apprenticeship Access Program and PEPT funded training to the plastics, rubber and cabling industry will improve pathway access.

Encourage the participation of people with a disability in vocational education and training at all qualification levels

The two actions identified in the Bridging Pathways Blueprint for Implementation that address this strategy are:

- 1. Identify and extend effective collaboration between secondary education and training providers that improves long term higher qualification outcomes for people with a disability and builds positive attitudes towards lifelong learning participation. This to include transition planning and individual program planning*
- 2. Within VET promote opportunities for people with a disability to gain higher qualifications through access to learning supports and services at all qualification level training programs, positive messages and marketing and access to advice from professionals with expertise in inclusive teaching practices that maximise opportunities for people with a disability.*

The participation rates of people with disabilities in the VET sector in higher AQF levels are lower than that of the total VET population. This is reflected in the Plastics, Rubber and Cabling Training Package with a higher proportion of people with disabilities enrolled in Certificate I, a similar proportion enrolled in Certificate II and lower proportions enrolled in AQF level III. In addition many people with disabilities are participating at Certificate I level without completing the full certificate. At the Certificate IV and Diploma levels the participation rate of people with a disability is 2.4% to 2.9%.

Training providers reported that they provided a range of learning supports and services to assist people with disabilities as required under the AQTF. All public providers were actively providing these services. Other RTOs had the services available but had not had the opportunity to actively provide them because their client base did not include people with disabilities. This suggested that the support mechanisms are in place but many are not being accessed and remain untested.

Supported employment services in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry reported a limited awareness of Training Packages, training providers and training programs available. The information they did have was limited to single programs they had been offered by training providers. They were excited about the prospect of providing nationally recognised training outcomes for their employees but had not been informed about the range of options available to them. This problem was more pronounced in regional locations.

Very few professionals with expertise in inclusive teaching practices and an understanding of the plastics, rubber and cabling industry were discovered whilst researching this paper. Professionals with experience in the disabilities sector and career counsellors are very unlikely to have experience in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry. Professionals in the plastics, rubber and

cablemaking industry are only likely to have disability awareness if working in a supported employment service or through personal rather than professional experience.

Employers, supported and open, and individuals, with and without disabilities, need to be informed about the total range of training services and supports available so that they are empowered to make their own choices. This will also empower them to make reasonable and informative demands on their training providers and shop around for the best service in a competitive market. Access to information alone will help open VET pathways.

Ensure that National Training Packages support the inclusion of people with a disability

The five actions identified in the Bridging Pathways Blueprint for Implementation that address this strategy are:

1. *Establish an equity advisory capacity within ANTA that has disability expertise (eg based on the current model of the language and literacy advisory service). This service will assist developers of National Training Packages to enhance opportunities for people with a disability and review the accessibility of packages prior to submission to the National Training Framework Committee*
2. *Within the current project on underpinning skills and knowledge in Training Packages, consider how any educational or experiential disadvantage of people with a disability can be addressed before or during training*
3. *Expand the availability of Certificate I qualifications in National Training Packages, to increase access to employment opportunities and to provide pathways into higher qualification levels*
4. *Develop new hybrid courses at Certificate I comprised of competencies from different Training Packages, to assist people with a disability to be employed*
5. *Improve the accessibility of Certificate II for people with a disability by ensuring that required competencies are not unnecessarily restrictive eg language requirements being higher than the level necessary to achieve work outcomes.*

Although ANTA has established an equity advisory capacity that has disability expertise to assist Training Package development the review of the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package preceded its introduction.

PMB01 does appear to contain the basic elements required for it to be considered as accessible and equitable such as a Certificate I qualification and the relevant references to reasonable adjustment.

Studies show that Training Packages by design are limited with respect to meeting the needs of people with disabilities because they assume a certain level of underpinning knowledge including literacy, numeracy, communication skills, team skills and workplace behaviour, ethics and image. These areas are addressed in preparatory skills training programs and are critical to the needs of people with disabilities. Again the problem is that there are poor or non-existent links between the preparatory skills training courses and Training Packages. The

exceptions are the New Apprenticeship Access Program and the WELL Program as both these programs deliver Training Package outcomes.

Access and equity is a requirement of the ATQF and all training providers reported that they had the mechanisms in place to support people with disabilities although most private providers had not had the occasion to implement them in the process manufacturing industry.

There was a significant positive response from training providers and Disability Employment Agencies to the news that as of July 2003 DAWs will be made available under the New Apprenticeship Scheme. This provides financial support previously only available in traditional apprenticeships for support services including mentoring, tutoring and interpreting and a wage subsidy. The changes to the New Apprenticeship Scheme also clearly identifies Certificate II as a legitimate outcome where as the current scheme is focused on Certificate III outcomes.

Training providers agreed that there is a lack of appropriate funding to support reasonable adjustment for people with disabilities and needs to be addressed before delivering training to people with disabilities becomes commercially appealing.

Access and equity is about practice. Despite the compliance of Training Packages and training providers with the requirements for access and equity a high degree of confusion was expressed by the front line regarding its practical application. This confusion related mainly to balancing the need to provide reasonable adjustment and accommodate learners' needs against the need for authenticity of the assessment process and the cost of providing the service. Confusion around both these issues is a barrier and restricts access to training for people with disabilities.

The raw materials to develop hybrid courses are in place as evidenced by the taster course example provided by Chisholm Institute of TAFE. Again it is important that definite links between preparatory skills training courses and Training Packages be established. Naturally the taster courses could evolve into taster Training Package hybrid programs.

Improve pathways for people with a disability into New Apprenticeships through collaboration between Group Training Companies, employers and Disability Employment Assistance Services

The five actions identified in the Bridging Pathways Blueprint for Implementation that address this strategy are:

1. *Increase collaboration between Group Training Companies, training providers, schools, generic and Disability Employment Assistance Services, to increase cross-sector awareness of the support available to employers and employees where an apprentice or trainee has a disability, review the adequacy of financial and non-financial support and encouragement for employers to hire apprentices and trainees who have a disability and review the adequacy of access to on-the-job support and workplace modifications for apprentices and trainees who have a disability*
2. *Promote programs available to assist people with a disability to undertake New Apprenticeships within publicly provided services for job seekers: Centrelink, The Job Network (DEWRSB), Disability Employment Assistance and Services (FaCS)*

3. *Review the Supported Wages System (administered by FaCS) to New Apprenticeships through the inclusion of the Supported Wage Model Clause in Training Awards and Workplace Agreements. This to be achieved through collaboration with DEWRSB and negotiation with Industry and Employee Representatives, within the review of the Supported Wages System, 2000*
4. *Review the DAWS in order to include people undertaking the equivalent of current traineeship programs*
5. *Encourage New Apprenticeships Centres to promote New Apprenticeships as opportunities for people with disabilities, including through marketing material that supports people with a disability. Ensure that students with a disability have equal opportunities to participate in VET in Schools and gain equitable outcomes*

Only one example of a person reporting disabilities and participating in a Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Traineeship was reported by the training providers consulted for this paper.

There are many possible reasons for this including:

- Training providers are delivering training to people reporting disabilities and don't realise it
- People with disabilities are not disclosing their disability
- Employers are not employing people with disabilities
- Employers are employing people with disabilities but not nominating them for training

The situation can be improved through a combination of collaboration and effective marketing.

Opportunities include:

- Collaboration between TAFE prevocational training departments and vocational training departments. Currently there is virtually no pathway for a person with disabilities attending a preparatory skills training course to progress into a Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package. There is no demand and there is no supply
- Collaboration between TAFE Disability Liaison services and the industry training departments. Currently TAFEs operate their industry training departments separately from their other educational services and the Disability Liaison Officers demonstrated a very low awareness of Training Packages and the industry clients their institutes work with
- Collaboration between private and public training providers to encourage piggy back training services. Private and public providers offer different services differentiated by their funding arrangements, the content of the training programs and the delivery options. The opportunity to identify specialist niche services and link complementary providers together is untapped
- Collaboration between training providers and disability professionals to provide professional support for disabilities professionals and professional development for the trainers. If trainers have not been delivering training to people with disabilities then they probably don't have a high level of disability awareness. Conversely if disability professionals have not been working in the VET sector then they probably don't have a high awareness of VET

- Collaboration between Group Training Companies and industry bodies to promote nationally recognised training to the industry. Group Training Companies have a very impressive track record when it comes to assisting people with disabilities to access VET training which is not being realised in the process manufacturing industry. Organisations such as Industry Training Advisory Boards could initiate links between Group Training Companies, training providers and industry to open this pathway
- Collaboration between training providers and schools to provide the VCAL certificate and Vet in Schools. Students currently have no access to the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package through VET in Schools and will only have access to the Training Package through the VCAL program if there is collaboration between schools and training providers
- Collaboration within government departments to create equitable services. A soon to be implemented example of this that received unanimous support from key players consulted is the introduction of the DAWS program to traineeships
- Collaboration between ITABs, industry bodies and schools to expose teachers, parents, careers advisors, integration aids and students to the process manufacturing industry and the pathways and supports available for people with disabilities
- Collaboration between ITABs, supported employment agencies and industry bodies to promote the New Apprenticeship Access Program to the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry
- Collaboration between ITABs, disability employment agencies, private training providers and industry bodies to promote the use of PETP funding in the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry.

Ensure that students with a disability have equal opportunities to participate in VET in schools and to gain equitable outcomes.

The action identified in the Bridging Pathways Blueprint for Implementation that addresses this strategy is:

Review VET in Schools to assess the current performance and future priorities of this program with regard to achieving outcomes for young people with a disability. This to include: provide equal access to VET in schools programs, provide equal access to opportunities for work-based experience and skills development, ensure that flexible delivery strategies and specialist on-the-job supports are available to schools and/or students when required, evaluate role of workplace coordinators in placement of students with a disability, ensure that outcomes for students include credit toward both a nationally recognised AQF qualification and the senior secondary certificate and establish consistent data collection across VET and the broader education system to ensure that outcomes are accurately measured.

A recent submission to the VCAA for a VET in Schools program for process manufacturing was not approved and therefore there is no pathway for students with or without disabilities to access a VET in Schools program in the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package in Victoria.

Increase employment and training pathways for people with a disability through greater access to recognition of prior learning or current competencies

The two actions identified in the Bridging Pathways Blueprint for Implementation that address this strategy are:

1. *Undertake research to improve opportunities for people with a disability to access recognition of prior learning (or current competencies) assessments. This to include: review disincentives for training providers to provide assessments, review disincentives for people with a disability to access assessments (eg costs) and develop assessment models*
2. *Provide technical expertise and advice from VET to Employment Assistance Services to increase recognition of prior learning (or current competencies) within CETPs and business services.*

All training providers offer RPL and RCC services that are under-accessed by people with disabilities.

However in the process manufacturing industry there is a unique and cost effective RCC service available through MLV, the Victorian Industry Training Advisory Board, called the Skills Assessment Program. This program employs the services of industry-based assessors to conduct workplace assessments and recognise current competencies. The success of the program when delivered to people with disabilities is demonstrated in the Brite Industries case study.

There exists scope to expand the marketing of the Skills Assessment Program to supported employment places as evidenced by the high level of interest expressed by supported employment services consulted in this paper in both regional and metropolitan areas. The program could be further expanded through collaboration with employment assistance services.

Another innovative and potential RCC tool is the Wage Assessment Tool being developed by the FaCS. The proposed tool is modelled on competency-based assessments and utilises endorsed Training Package competencies. Unfortunately there is no intention to issue participants with nationally recognised outcomes such as certificates and statements of attainment. Collaborating with the VET sector to involve RTOs in the assessment process would open up this pathway and provide a significant opportunity for people with disabilities to gain VET outcomes.

Foster clear pathways for people with a disability from vocational education and training into employment services and directly into employment

The three actions identified in the Bridging Pathways Blueprint for Implementation that address this strategy are:

1. *Distribute information that will assist training providers to support people with various types of disability to access generic employment agencies including Job Network providers (DEWRSB), Disability Employment Assistance Services (FaCS) through direct contact or through Centrelink and disability advocacy agencies*
2. *Establish collaborative approaches to increase access to training and employment opportunities for people with a disability across VET and*

employment programs. Promote the opportunities for people with a disability in VET to Job Network (DEWRSB), Centrelink and Disability Employment Assistance Services (FaCS). Review current driving and restraining forces for FaCS and DEWRSB employment services to facilitate recognised training outcomes for people with a disability

3. *Undertake collaborative research to identify strategies that enhance cross-sector effectiveness between VET and Disability Employment Assistance Services. This to include analysis of pathways, cross-sector service relationships and employment outcomes.*

In the process manufacturing industry there are few people accessing the VET system and even fewer people with disabilities accessing the VET system.

People with disabilities who are accessing the VET system tend to be employed and access training via the support of their employer. Traditionally we think that training leads to employment where in fact in the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry employment leads to training and or assessment and possibly a VET outcome.

The common characteristic found in successful projects that have assisted people with disabilities to participate in the VET sector and achieve Training Package outcomes is collaboration.

The collaboration works when all players are motivated by the desire to achieve the specific result of assisting the individual with the disability, often despite the system. Successful collaboration examples of which there are few include the Waves-Email Lighthouse projects and the Brite Industries Skills Assessment project.

Conversely the common characteristic in less successful projects is a lack of collaboration. This lack of collaboration is being reported at all levels and was reported many times by key players. There is a lack of collaboration between government departments resulting in a wide and confusing selection of disjointed support programs with unclear cross eligibility requirements. There is a lack of collaboration between TAFE departments that could be working together to facilitate pathways. There is a lack of collaboration between other service providers and a lack of awareness of functions and limitations of the services provided.

The opportunity to open pathways for people with disabilities into Training Packages by improving the collaboration between the various players is significant.

The possibilities are endless and include:

- Collaboration between Centrelink, supported employment agencies, training providers, NACs, Diversity@work, ITABs and industry representatives to promote training. Employers are simply not aware of the full range of training services available to skill up their workplaces and are only given select information limited to specific services by training providers if marketed to at all. This is particularly true of employers in supported employment and in regional areas
- Collaboration between supported employment agencies, ITABs and industry bodies to educate industry about the benefits of employing and training people with disabilities. Supported employment agencies reported that employers are fearful of employing people with disabilities because it may highlight occupational health and safety deficiencies or require costly workplace modifications

- Collaboration between training providers and supported employment services to deliver nationally recognised training. Supported employment services are simply not being marketed to by private providers and, in some regional cases, they are not being marketed to by public providers actively delivering training against the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package
- Collaboration between government departments to create cohesive services. For example collaboration between FaCS and DEST to ensure that the new Wage Assessment Tool is not only modelled on the VET system but results in nationally recognised competency outcomes
- Collaboration between ITABs, industry bodies, Diversity@work and supported employment services to identify and reward willing host employers and promote the plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry as a viable employment and training option for people with disabilities
- Collaboration between the CRS and training providers to create a link between the vocational assessments performed at the CRS and nationally recognised Training Package outcomes
- Collaboration between the CRS, training providers and NACs to create a link between work placements and New Apprenticeships

Collaboration helps bring together the services provided in the disabilities sector, the VET sector and the employment sector creating synergies instead of dysfunction and opening pathways that exist in theory but not in practice in the process manufacturing industry.

Other issues and concerns

Data collection

Aggregated data relating to participation rates in VET activities is available for DEST government funded pathways. Participation rates for VET accessed via other pathways such as fee for service or the Skills Assessment Program are not funded and therefore are not included in the data.

To accurately monitor the participation rates of people with disabilities and indeed all people in the VET system data must be collected from all pathways. Improving the participation rates of people with disabilities in the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package is a complex issue and may need innovative solutions such as the Skills Assessment Tool, the Wage Assessment Tool and the Vocational Assessments at the CRS. It is critical that this data be collected.

Industry perceptions

The plastics, rubber and cablemaking industry has a low profile. It is not like the retail industry or the hospitality industry that we all participate in during our day-to-day activities. Most teachers, careers advisors, parents and disability professionals have not visited a plastics, rubber or cablemaking facility and are not aware of the training and employment opportunities available. The industry is perceived as a shrinking industry with an increasing requirement for higher-level technical skills. This perception leads to misinformed assumptions about the availability of low skilled packing and assembling roles and the job opportunities for people with disabilities. The industry is also perceived as dusty, dirty and unsafe and not a desirable career choice. The gap between the perception and the reality is a barrier to entry.

Good intentions

Competency standards describe the work requirements from the perspective of the industry. If a person is doing a job such as assembling and packaging then they are demonstrating that they are capable of being trained and could be assessed against a Training Package.

A supported employment agency gave an example where an employer did not proceed with a traineeship because it was decided during the sign up in consultation with the NAC it was decided that the individual could not cope with the training. The individual continued to work for the organisation.

The decision was made with good intentions. The employer and the NAC didn't want the individual to suffer a negative training experience.

There are two problems with this example:

1. The individual was denied training based on their disability.
This is discriminatory and highlights a need for raising equal opportunity awareness for people involved in facilitating access to the VET system.
The problem also raises the issue of how well reasonable adjustment is perceived, how well reasonable adjustment is implemented and how willing training providers and their trainers are to accommodate the needs of learners with disabilities. The system needs to be confident that it can deliver to people with disabilities.
2. The individual returned to work demonstrating competence and the ability to be trained on the job.
This raises concerns about whether the interpretation of competency standards or the perceptions of competency standards really do describe industry's perspective of work requirements.
It also raises concerns about whether there is a perceived difference between competence against competency standards and competence on the job.

Language

The different sectors that need to collaborate to facilitate pathways use similar yet different language. For example, in the Merriwa Industries case study employers refer to productivity skills training to describe production type skills and competency skills training to describe soft skills reflecting the language of the Wage Assessment process. In the VET system there is no such distinction and competency skills training relates to all types of training. These differences in language add to confusion and create barriers to communication and collaboration between the players.

Bridging pathways – mobilising existing pathways

Only 2.2% of people with disabilities enrolled in PMB01/PMB98 report a disability despite the fact that there are thirty-five potential existing pathways.

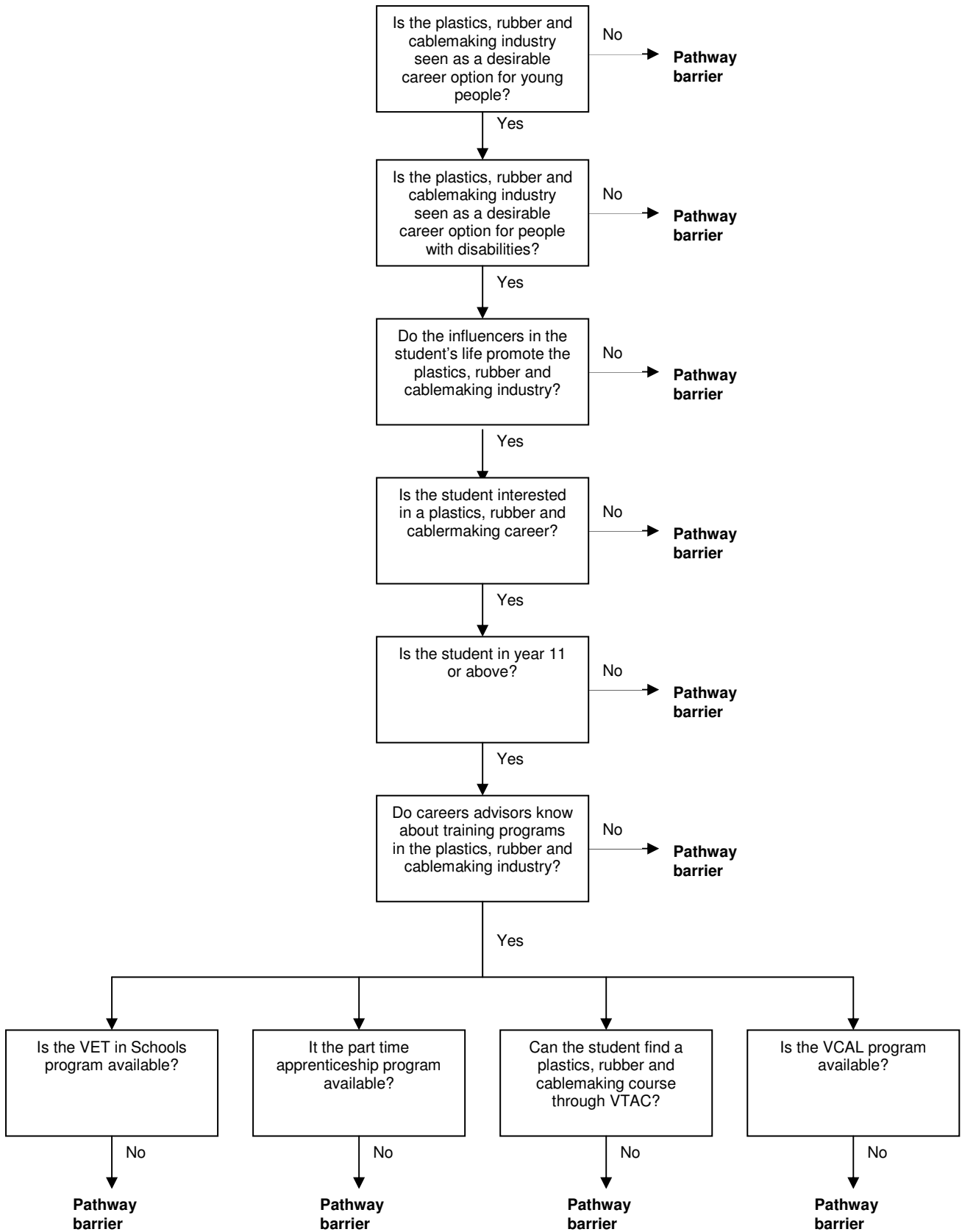
Much of the feedback documented in this paper draws attention to the difficulties service providers face as a result of the complexity and vastness of the system. Their problem is that there are too many programs rather than not enough. Consequently the collective knowledge of how best to use the system to achieve equitable VET and employment outcomes for people with disabilities is spread too thinly.

There is also a lack of demand from industry and a lack of supply from the training providers. With no push and no pull the pathways are simply lie dormant. What is needed is not more programs to bridge the gap but strategies that mobilise existing pathways.

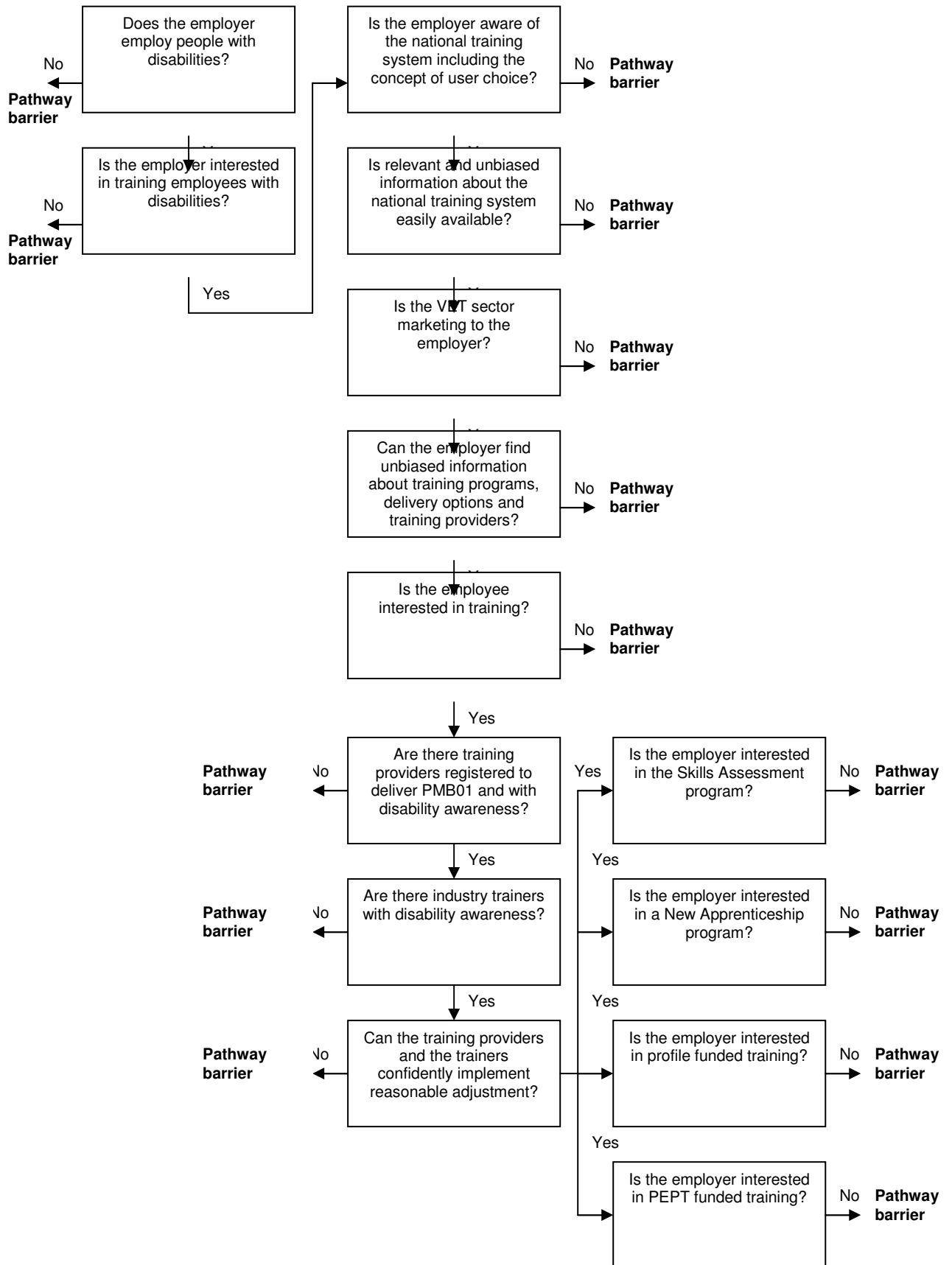
The following two diagrams show examples of pathways people with disabilities might follow to access PMB01 from the employment sector and from the secondary school sector.

The diagrams demonstrate the overwhelming number of pathway barriers that block access. The recommendations in this report focus on strategies to rationalise and mobilise existing pathways rather than create new pathways and further overload the system.

Example pathway in the secondary school system



Example pathway in the employment sector



Conclusions

The distribution of the training product from the VET system to the customer takes place within very complex channels of distribution with many players and programs that are poorly understood, disconnected and often in competition with each other. It is not surprising then that despite the 35 pathways to assist people with disabilities to enter the VET system identified in this report and despite the enthusiasm and dedication of the individuals consulted the participation rates are very low. The system is too complex with too many players. Service providers are confused and frustrated.

Pathways to PMB01 are difficult to access for all people and become increasingly difficult to access for people who are not currently in employment, for people with disabilities and for people located outside the metropolitan area. They are difficult to access because they are not mobilised.

People accessing PMB01 tend to be employed, able bodied and based in metropolitan Melbourne and access the training via the support of their employer. Traditionally we think that training leads to employment where in fact in the plastics, rubber and cabling industries employment leads to training and or assessment and possibly a VET outcome.

Employers, supported and open, and individuals, with and without disabilities, need to be informed about the total range of training services and supports available so that they are empowered to make their own choices. This will also empower them to make reasonable and informative demands on their training providers and shop around for the best service in a competitive market. Access to information alone will help open VET pathways.

Specific issues highlighted in this report are:

- Prejudices against people with disabilities that block access to pathways exist in both the general society and in the disabilities community
- The success of training and employment of people with disabilities is as much a factor of the support the person with disabilities receives as it is about the attitudes and behaviours of the people with whom they interact
- The plastics, rubber and cabling industry is not perceived as offering suitable positions, providing promising career options or desirable working conditions. The industry is poorly understood and untried by people outside the industry
- Not all people with disabilities are suited to open employment and supported employment provides a legitimate training and employment pathway
- The transition into open employment is difficult with a high return rate. This is due to social rather than vocational skill reasons which is a function of the level of disability awareness of people within the open employment environment
- Pathways from preparatory skills training courses to Training Packages are not clearly defined except in the case of the New

Apprenticeship Access Program that is not being delivered in the plastics, rubber and cabling industry

- Marketing of training programs by training providers is inadequate and biased and limits access and equity. Industry is not informed of the options available for training products, training providers and training delivery options. This is particularly true of organisations outside the metropolitan areas where competition between training providers is significantly lower
- Disability awareness within the employment sector and the VET system is low except within organisations and departments working specifically with people with disabilities
- Where there is collaboration there is an increased chance of a successful outcome. Where there is a lack of collaboration there is a high chance of an unsuccessful outcome. There are few examples of collaboration and few successes
- The Skills Assessment Program is the most successful model identified for people with disabilities to gain a VET outcome in the plastics, rubber and cabling industries
- Data relating to participation rates in the VET system is incomplete because it excludes Training Package outcomes not funded through DEST such as the Skills Assessment Program.

Appendices

Appendix 1: What is a disability?

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (the Act), was proclaimed in March 1993 It states that disability means:

- “(a) Total or partial loss of the person’s bodily or mental functions; or
- (b) Total or partial loss of a part of the body; or
- (c) The presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or
- (d) The presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or
- (e) The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person’s body; or
- (f) A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or
- (g) A disorder, illness or disease that affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour; and includes a disability that:
- (h) Presently exists; or
- (i) Previously existed but no longer exists; or
- (j) May exist in the future; or
- (k) Is imputed to a person.”

Appendix 2: What is reasonable adjustment?

Disabilities can be accommodated by arranging appropriate adjustments to the training environment to lessen the impact of the disability. These changes are called 'reasonable adjustment' and are contained in the ATQF.

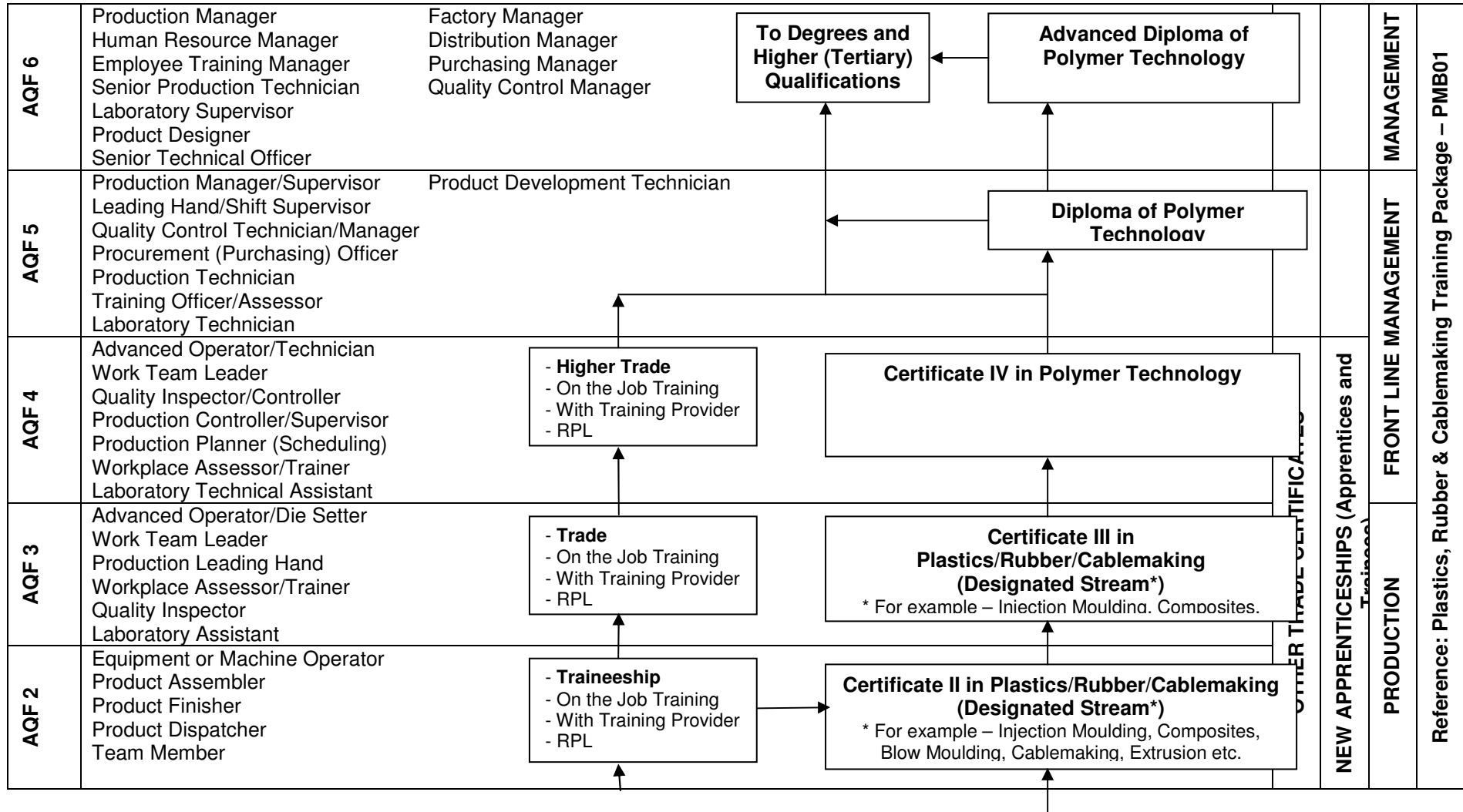
If an individual meets the entry requirements of a training program then the training provider must make the necessary reasonable adjustments to help them complete the training.

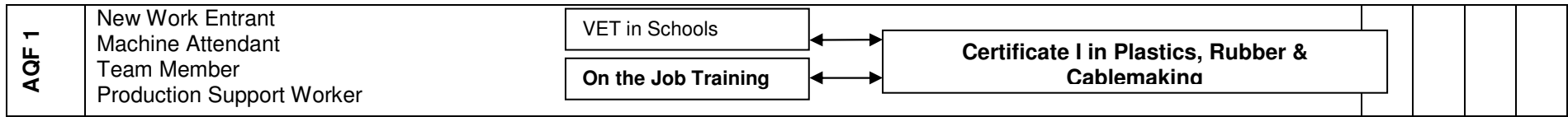
Examples of reasonable adjustments include:

- Special consideration/consideration of disadvantage entry criteria
- Application and enrolment support
- Orientation and "taster" courses and programs
- Accessible campuses and residential accommodation
- Access location maps
- Educational support and class assistance (eg note takers, readers, sign interpreters (AUSLAN), tutors, facilitated communicators)
- TTY (Telephone typewriter) facilities
- Information provision (alternative formats: Braille, audio-tapes, large-print, raised-line and disk production)
- Advocacy
- Co-ordinating external services (eg The Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind Talking Book Library, and the Victorian Deaf Society Interpreting and Note taking Service)
- Information and possible provision of specialised equipment and adaptive technology
- Improved access to buildings and lecture theatres
- Special parking arrangements
- Peer group support
- On-campus assistance
- Liaise with academic staff to ensure that appropriate teaching methods and assessment is provided
- Library assistance (eg extended library loans, telephone loans, computer loan bookings, assistance to access material, private study rooms, special equipment)
- Resource guides
- Referral to services and agencies both within and external to the institution (eg medical, personal, and academic counselling services)
- Mobility assessment and training
- Learning contracts (eg to meet inherent requirements)
- Student loans for the purchase of computers and other expensive equipment
- Examination support such as negotiating alternative examination and assessment formats, for example, oral, aural, audio tapes, Braille, and large-

print arrangements; extended time and rest breaks; providing a reader/scribe [amanuensis]; possible use of a typewriter, computer, or other technology; special examination location; separate supervision; and permission to take medication or special food.

Appendix 3: PMB01 Pathways





Appendix 4: Project Participants

Training Providers

Apprentices Trainees Employment
Bendigo Region Institute of TAFE
Chisholm Institute of TAFE
Cryovac
Futurum Australia
Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE
Holmesglen Institute of TAFE
Jobs Australia Ltd
Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE
Manufacturing Industry Training
Services
Newskills Ltd
NMIT
Northern Group Training Ltd
University of Ballarat
Wodonga Institute of TAFE

Case Studies

Merriwa Industries
Brite Industries
Noble Industries

Other Stakeholders

BEST
Blue Line Laundry
Brotherhood of St Lawrence
Centrelink
CRS Australia
Department of Education, Science
and Training
Department of Family and
Community Services
Department of Human Services
Disability Employment Action
Centre
Diversity@work
Greater Dandenong LLEN
Health Outcomes International
Jobs Plus
Manufacturing Learning Australia
Manufacturing Learning Victoria
MEGT
Melbourne Employment Services
SensWide Services
South East Industries
Vatmi Industries
Victorian Qualifications Authority
Yes Personnel
Yooralla Society of Victoria

Appendix 5: Survey

Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Pathways

Please complete the following questions and return this form via any of the methods detailed at the end of this form by Wednesday 23rd October 2002

3. Describe your RTO

- a. Private provider
- b. Public provider
- c. Enterprise based provider
- d. ACE provider

4. What percentage of your current total client base reports a disability?

 %

5. Do you deliver preparatory training programs for people with a disability?

Yes No

If yes please give details:

Course Name	Course Code	Delivery Mode	Funding Program

6. What percentage of your client base enrolled in the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package reports a disability?

 %

7. How can learners with a disability gain a Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking Training Package qualification through your RTO?

a. New Apprenticeship Program

Yes No

b. Access Program

Yes No

c. PETP or profile

Yes No

- d. VET in schools
Yes No
- e. RPL/RCC
Yes No
- f. Other (please specify)
Yes No

8. How are the learners' needs accommodated when they report a disability?

- a. Special consideration/consideration of disadvantage entry criteria
Yes No
- b. Application and enrolment support
Yes No
- c. Orientation and "taster" courses and programs
Yes No
- d. Accessible training centres and residential accommodation
Yes No
- e. Access location maps
Yes No
- f. Educational support and class assistance (eg note takers, readers, sign interpreters (AUSLAN), tutors, facilitated communicators)
Yes No
- g. TTY facilities
Yes No
- h. Information provision (alternative formats: Braille, audio-tapes, large-print, raised-line and disk production)
Yes No
- i. Advocacy
Yes No
- j. Coordinating external services (eg The Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind Talking Book Library, and the Victorian Deaf Society Interpreting and Note taking Service)
Yes No
- k. Information and possible provision of specialised equipment and adaptive technology

- Yes No
- l. Improved access to buildings and training rooms
Yes No
- m. Special parking arrangements
Yes No
- n. Peer group support
Yes No
- o. Liaise with training staff to ensure that appropriate teaching methods and assessment is provided
Yes No
- p. Resource guides
Yes No
- q. Referral to services and agencies both within and external to the RTO (eg medical, personal, and academic counseling services)
Yes No
- r. Mobility assessment and training
Yes No
- s. Learning contracts (eg to meet inherent requirements)
Yes No
- t. Student loans for the purchase of computers and other expensive equipment
Yes No
- u. Assessment support such as negotiating alternative assessment formats, for example, oral, aural, audio tapes, Braille, and large-print arrangements; extended time and rest breaks; providing a reader/scribe [amanuensis]; possible use of a typewriter, computer, or other technology; special examination location; separate supervision; and permission to take medication or special food.
Yes No
- v. Other. Please specify

Appendix 6: References

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Appendix 7: Endnotes

¹ NCVET (2000) Australian VET Statistics. At a Glance: Students with a disability in vocational education and training

² NCVET (2000) Australian VET Statistics. At a Glance: Students with a disability in vocational education and training

³ NCVET (2000) Australian VET Statistics. At a Glance: Students with a disability in vocational education and training

⁴ NCVET (2000) Australian VET Statistics. At a Glance: Students with a disability in vocational education and training

⁵ NCVET (2000) Australian VET Statistics. At a Glance: Students with a disability in vocational education and training

⁶ NCVET (2001) Unpublished statistics

⁷ ANTA (1998) National Training Package for the Plastics, Rubber and Cablemaking industries, ANTA