

Future of Work
Vocational Education and Training
Policy
ACTU CONGRESS 2003

Policy Framework

1. After over a decade of change to Australia's vocational education and training system, unions have identified a need for new objectives and renewed strategies to make skills development the critical issue for Australian industry, workplaces and workers.
2. This policy reflects new objectives and strategies for a renewed union agenda to promote skills development as a priority industrial issue within Australian industry and workplaces.

The Achievement of a Nationally Consistent Training System with Agreed Standards Across all Jurisdictions

3. Congress endorses the ACTU and its constituents to seek:
 - (a) agreement on broad principles for a nationally consistent training system through the Joint Industry Training & Education Council (JITEC) and where it is appropriate these should be adopted by Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and the various Commonwealth, state and territory jurisdictions;
 - (b) to strengthen training packages, the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) through adoption of agreed standards and conditions that ensure greater equity and parity of qualifications and incorporate learning strategies and modes of delivery and assessment where specified by industry;
 - (c) agreement through the National Quality Training Council and various state and territory jurisdictions to implement a wider program of strategic auditing of registered training organisations, involving key industry and union players, and including assessment of learning outcomes of apprentices and trainees; and

- (d) agreement of ANTA-MINCO for employer incentives to be negotiated as a nationally consistent program through the ANTA funding agreement.

Maintaining an Industry led Vocational Education and Training System that Responds to the Needs of Australian Industry and Workers

- 4. Congress endorses the ACTU and its constituents to:
 - (a) seek support from State and Territory Governments to restructure the board of the ANTA to better reflect industry membership and ownership;
 - (b) ensure strong union representation and better coordination between union representatives on state and territory training authorities;
 - (c) support the development of industry advisory structures at a state and national level that better reflect industry skills profiles and training needs; and
 - (d) work with industry and employer bodies to seek to improve industry advisory structures to take on the role of developing industry skills profiles, training needs, training products and training interventions.

Improving the Quality of Training Delivery and Outcomes for the Benefit of Australian Industry and Employees

- 5. Congress endorses the ACTU and its constituents to:
 - (a) seek through the review of training packages and the AQF to ensure greater consistency of training effort and quality where the same qualification is delivered by different providers and also when comparing different qualifications at the same AQF level;
 - (b) seek agreement of ANTA-MINCO that the level of some apprenticeship qualifications need to be increased to reflect the true value of the training competencies and skills outcomes; and
 - (c) develop strategies and coordinate unions about improving the rights, entitlements and quality of training experiences for apprentices and trainees employed through group training organisations, including developing an organising strategy around the recruitment of apprentices and trainees.

Improving the Links Between Training Effort and Investment to Skills Development and Employment Outcomes

6. Congress endorses the ACTU and its constituents to:
 - (a) seek agreement from State and Territory Governments to implement skills development projects that better complement regional development initiatives. Using government funding and investment in training facilities, such initiatives should seek to leverage maximum investment from local employers and link training initiatives with skills development needs and employment outcomes within the local region;
 - (b) seek agreement with State and Territory Governments, as well as industry parties to identify and implement appropriate training interventions within particular industries and regions, linking training initiatives to industry skill needs and fair and productive employment outcomes;
 - (c) seek agreement with ANTA-MINCO to adopt an integrated and coordinated approach to future labour market and skills forecasting in conjunction with industry parties which links specific training interventions within identified industries; and
 - (d) work with peak employer organisations through JITEC to adopt joint union-employer proposals for specific training interventions within specified industries.

Developing More Effective Training Strategies to Help Young People in Transition from School to Work

7. Congress endorses the ACTU and its constituents to:
 - (a) work with industry parties and governments to help secure a right to at least twelve years of education and learning as a minimum benchmark through schooling, vocational training and structured work-based learning; and
 - (b) work with industry and State and Territory Governments to improve the VET in Schools program to ensure greater quality and value of training outcomes.

Implementing Specific Strategies to Recognise and Assess Skills and to Re-Skill and Up-Skill the Existing Workforce

8. Congress endorses the ACTU and its constituents to:
 - (a) seek agreement through the JITEC to lobby governments for a separate funding arrangement for existing workers, including skill recognition, through the ANTA funding agreement;
 - (b) seek agreement with ANTA-MINCO to allocate at least \$360 million per annum funding for training and assessment initiatives for the existing workforce consistent with this policy through the 2004-2006 ANTA funding agreement;
 - (c) seek funding from ANTA and State and Territory Governments to help unions implement pilot programs for Worker Training Representatives within workplaces;
 - (d) support unions through the implementation of an education and awareness program for union officers in developing knowledge and understanding of the national training system and broad trade union objectives for a renewed union training agenda; and
 - (e) support unions to implement strategies to improve skills and qualifications for union members, including through the development and support of Worker Training Representatives.

Developing Strategies that Give Equitable Access to Vocational Education and Training Opportunities to the Non-Standard Workforce and for Disadvantaged People Within the Labour Market

9. Congress endorses the ACTU and its constituents to seek agreement:
 - (a) through the ANTA funding agreement to prioritise and expand literacy programs for existing workers, including through funding arrangements to allow for cooperative ventures that promote basic literacy and numeracy training;
 - (b) for increased funding for more training places for young people, people with a disability and indigenous persons, particularly through access to higher level traineeships and apprenticeships;
 - (c) from State and Territory Governments to introduce increased notice of potential redundancies by industry to government, unions and affected employees, as well as the provision of publicly funded retraining opportunities primarily through TAFE and employment search assistance; and

- (d) from the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments through promotional activities, public sector jobs, as well as joint ventures to promote the direct employment of both older workers and young people.

Establishing Vocational Education and Training and Skills Development as a Priority Industrial Issue Within Industry and at the Workplace

10. Congress endorses the ACTU and its constituents to:

- (a) continue to seek to update industrial awards and agreements to incorporate skills based classification structures linked to competencies available under national training packages and wherever possible apply the industrial principle that full award rates should be applied to traineeships, and that existing workers undertaking a training contract should not suffer any reduction in pay as a result of entering a traineeship or apprenticeship;
- (b) seek improvements in the rights and protections available for trainees, apprentices and existing workers undertaking training contracts through Commonwealth, state and territory legislation and industrial instruments, through seeking the exemption of trainees and apprentices from AWA's or other forms of individual contracts, and through securing adequate resources for monitoring and enforcement of training agreements;
- (c) pursue improvements in apprentice wages within federal awards as well as incorporate improved wages through the organising and bargaining agenda; and
- (d) review and seek improvements to training wages to strengthen quality of training contracts for trainees, provide greater protection of trainee entitlements, as well as to take account of changes which have occurred, in particular the growth in the number of older workers now undertaking traineeships, and to ensure that training wages only apply where actual quality structured training is being delivered.

Maintaining and Improving the TAFE System as a Viable Public Provider that is Responsive to the Needs of Industry, Employees and the Community

11. Congress endorses the ACTU and its constituents to:
 - (a) seek a commitment to additional funding for TAFE from ANTA-MINCO to fund enrolment growth, quality improvement, equitable access and to redress existing resource pressures;
 - (b) pursue through ANTA-MINCO support for an agreed cap on access to user choice funding by registered training organisations for New Apprenticeship training; and
 - (c) seek commitments from the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments to maintain infrastructure in trade training within TAFE Institutes and to establish co-investment training infrastructure arrangements within metropolitan and regional areas to maintain the skills needs of local industries.

Worker Training Representatives

Pilot Projects

12. The ACTU has received funding from the Australian National Training Authority to fund and develop an appropriate training, education and development program and resource materials to support a pilot project of workplace training representatives.
13. Specific objectives of the pilot project are to support the training and work of representatives to:
 - (a) raise awareness and education among workers about the benefits of undertaking structured industry training;
 - (b) promote negotiation between unions, workers and employers for the implementation of workplace training plans for existing workers, including establishing effective training mechanisms to facilitate and take proper account of the recognition of current competencies;
 - (c) establish liaisons between employees within workplaces and external training bodies such as industry advisory bodies, registered training organisations and others to promote structured training at the workplace level; and
 - (d) enable workers to participate effectively within workplace skills audits, to develop and negotiate skills training plans and undertake workplace assessment.

14. Specific stages of the program will include:
- (a) a review of the UK Union Learning Representatives material, current union material on VET issues, draft trade union competencies, and recognition of current competency procedures;
 - (b) establishment of a project reference group to assist in the development of a working draft of VET training materials and resources;
 - (c) development of a working draft of training materials, including information resources around general VET issues for union officers, training representatives and members covering the following areas:
 - (i) accessing industry structured training and an understanding of union objectives;
 - (ii) accessing relevant industry or occupational training packages;
 - (iii) undertaking training needs analysis and coordinating a recognition of current competencies;
 - (iv) negotiating training plans and agreements with employers; and
 - (v) undertaking workplace assessment.
 - (d) development of specific industry and workplace training strategies with pilot unions, including nominated training representatives;
 - (e) the implementation of pilot programs within identified industries and workplaces; and
 - (f) undertaking professional development of union training staff in VET material and pilot project outcomes.

Industrial Arrangements to Support Worker Training Representatives

15. In order to perform their role, worker training representatives will also require training and support, as well as access to reasonable paid time off to support their activities.
16. To secure these rights and conditions, unions will need to incorporate these matters into their bargaining agendas. A model clause for union negotiations is provided at Attachment 1.

17. Training and support can be provided by The Union Education Foundation, the trust established by the ACTU to promote the training and skills of worker representatives.
18. The ACTU Organising Centre can also work with labour councils and individual unions to develop their own industry or union approach to skills development and vocational training and to help implement appropriate organising strategies around these.
19. The ACTU Congress calls upon the Federal Government to provide an additional \$180 million funding during 2004, cumulative over the length of the ANTA 2004-06 funding agreement, to support the national vocational education and training system.
20. Vocational education and training should no longer be treated as the poor cousin to the university sector. Un-met demand has meant that around 40,000 people are being turned away from TAFE each year while enrolments continue to grow by around 5%. Yet, quality vocational education and training is a viable option for both younger and mature people to develop their skills and expand their employment opportunities.

Attachment 1 - Model Clause

(1) Worker Training Representatives

- (i) The employer acknowledges the constructive role union elected worker training representatives undertake through the promotion and development of skills and training in the workplace.
- (ii) Worker training representatives will be granted reasonable time off during working hours to:
 - (a) consult with the union, union members and employees;
 - (b) represent the interests of employees to the employer;
 - (c) participate within any established training committee or training forum within the workplace; and
 - (d) attend accredited union education.
- (iii) The employer will consult with the worker training representative over all matters related to skills development and training of employees within the workplace.
- (iv) Employees will be given full access to worker training representatives to discuss any skills and training matter.
- (v) Worker training representatives will be provided with convenient access to facilities for the purposes of undertaking their role. Such facilities include telephones, computers, e-mail, photocopiers, facsimile machines, storage facilities, meeting rooms and notice boards.

(2) Training Committee

- (i) A training committee comprising of X number of employer and X number of union representatives shall be established in the workplace/enterprise, including the union-nominated worker training representative.
- (ii) The role of the training committee shall be clearly set out and include:
 - (a) developing a training program including available training courses and career opportunities;
 - (b) recommending individual employees for training and reclassification;
 - (c) recommending recognition of current competencies for individual employees;

- (d) monitoring and advising management and employees regarding the ongoing effectiveness of the training; and
- (e) recommending the registered training organisation to deliver training in accordance with the training plan.

(3) Training Program

- (i) Following proper consultation with the training committee and nominated worker training representative, the employer shall develop a training program consistent with:
 - (a) the current and future skill needs of the workplace/enterprise;
 - (b) the size, structure and nature of the operations of the workplace/enterprise;
 - (c) the need to develop vocational skills relevant to the workplace/enterprise and the industry through accredited courses undertaken by a registered training organisation in accordance with the relevant national Training Package/s;
 - (d) the need to recognise current competencies for existing employees.