

# *VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING RESOLUTION ACTU CONGRESS 1997*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Congress notes that the activity of unions has protected the Vocational Education and Training System and has been instrumental in:

- 1] maintaining an Australian Recognition Framework which ensures competencies are nationally recognised by all providers and that providers are subject to quality audits and national registration criteria;
- 2] maintaining an Australian Qualifications Framework whereby there will be consistent national qualifications;
- 3] ensuring that the system of Training Packages developed primarily by Industry Training Advisory Boards includes unions and ensures that national industry standards form the basis for qualifications; and
- 4] maintaining a focus on apprenticeships and traineeships and increasing opportunities for young people.

1.2 However, Congress notes a number of negative impacts of the election of the Federal Coalition Government in March 1996 together with conservative State Governments including:

- 1] the expansion of an artificial training market through the introduction of use choice from January 1998, the increased tendering of public funds, and the pressure to grant third party access to TAFE infrastructure;
- 2] the threat of customised qualifications and enterprise training packages which are inconsistent with qualifications based on industry standards;
- 3] the proposals to remove the protection for apprenticeship and traineeship contracts in State legislation including independent supervision and appeals;
- 4] the encouragement of individual contracts and AWAs for apprentices and trainees and the lower wages and conditions which result from calling all "training" unproductive and unpaid;

- 5] the attempts to remove union influence from the process and to make individual employers the clients of the system without proper regard for industry, social, employee and student needs;
- 6] significant funding cuts to vocational training by:
  - 1] a Federal budget cut of \$72m in 1996;
  - 2] an end to annual increases of \$70m in Commonwealth growth funds;
  - 3] a requirement by State and Territory governments to increase training places by 500,000 over 5 years before any agreement on the continuation of Federal growth funds;
  - 4] an insistence that State and Territory governments fund training places for an estimated 150,000 young unemployed forced off unemployment benefits;
  - 5] a demand that States and Territories fund the expected growth from the introduction of the 'New Apprenticeship' scheme; and
  - 6] unsubstantiated attacks on the public provider of training, TAFE, especially by Employer Associations and threats to the delivery of trade training in TAFE through the introduction of user choice which diverts \$600m of public funds from TAFE Institutes.

## 2 1997 - 2000

- 2.1 During the period 1997-2000 the ACTU and unions will take action to achieve greater access of members to vocational training and other processes (eg: RPL) leading to a recognised national qualification. Qualifications should be based on national industry competency standards and training should be complementary to career structures which allow individuals to maximise their individual potential.
- 2.2 The ACTU and affiliates will be actively involved with the provision of education and training courses to members in partnership with TAFE and universities and supportive employers.
- 2.3 The initiatives which the ACTU and unions will take to promote apprenticeships and traineeships include:
  - 1] Undertake a series of initiatives to increase apprenticeship and traineeship numbers and to defend the conditions of apprentices and trainees and the quality of their training;
  - 2] A particular focus on three and four year apprenticeships involving on and off the job training through TAFE so that one year traineeships do not replace the

integrated apprenticeships. The period of the apprenticeship may be varied based upon the achievement of competencies.

- 3] Claims for the employment of additional apprentices and trainees in enterprise agreements;
- 4] Focus on employment of apprentices and traineeships in the contracting area and areas where public services are privatised tendered or contracted out and include a requirement for training in tenders or contracts;
- 5] Oppose State legislation which will limit protection of apprentices and trainees, and remove the requirement for State involvement in termination of agreements and access to independent supervision and appeals processes;
- 6] Oppose the use of individual contracts and AWA's for the employment of apprentices and trainees and the role of the approving authorities in reducing wages;
- 7] Ensure public attention is paid to the outcomes of governments' actions which impact on apprentice/trainee numbers, including reduction in funding, and
- 8] Ensure awards provide maximum protection for full and part-time apprentices and trainees.

### 3 COMMITMENTS

#### 3.1 The ACTU will:

- 1] Remain committed to the objectives put forward in the AVTS Carmichael report, in particular those which related to the expansion of opportunity for workers to have access to vocational training;
- 2] Ensure that there is a strong national vocational education and training system in Australia which:
  - 1] is based on national industry competency standards;
  - 2] leads to recognised national qualifications;
  - 3] is delivered through accredited training providers;
  - 4] is available without a HECS type scheme being introduced;
  - 5] achieves quality outcomes which are valued by the individual and by industry including regular audits of providers incorporating the views of users; and
  - 6] improves job security for apprentices and trainees.

- 3] Actively oppose the introduction and implementation of user choice and avoid conflict of interest where the employer is a provider. Seek to ensure that the public provider TAFE is regarded as an essential partner to industry and support the AEU, TAFE works campaign;
- 4] Actively oppose the notion of an employer led VET sector and seek a return to the notion of industry as a partnership between employers, employees and unions held by the previous Federal Labor government;
- 5] Actively monitor the introduction of a "training market" to ensure that it does not result in a reduction in either the availability or the quality of training to trainees and apprentices throughout Australia;
- 6] Initiate action to assist affiliates to negotiate enterprise agreements which incorporate competency based pay rates for trainees and apprentices;
- 7] Ensure that progression through a competency pay scale is based on fair criteria;
- 8] Play an active role in the IRC proceedings regarding youth wage rates to promote outcomes which:
  - 1] maintain real wage levels;
  - 2] seek to introduce competency based pay rates;
  - 3] achieve the 'rate for the job' when an individual is fully competent;
- 9] Continue to take an active role, ensure adequate funding and promote union policies in forums such as:
  - 1] Australian National Training Authority
  - 2] National Training Framework Committee
  - 3] Joint Industry Training and Education Council;
  - 4] Industry Training Advisory Bodies;
  - 5] Industry Training Companies; and
  - 6] State Training Authorities.
- 10] Play an active role in the VET Schools initiative by ensuring:
  - 1] maximum co-operation between TAFE and Schools to avoid duplication of resources;

- 2] teachers and workplace trainers have reached Workplace Trainer Category 2 standard and have appropriate industrial experience;
  - 3] adequate resourcing of vocational training in schools;
  - 4] protection for apprentices and trainees including work and journey cover;
  - 5] all post compulsory students have access to a core general education and possess the key competencies on completion of their vocational training in Schools; and
  - 6] education unions and other affiliates oppose the use of AWAs and individual contracts for apprentice/trainees and will promote the role of trade unionism amongst apprentices and trainees.
- 
- 11] Ensure that gender equity outcomes and regional access are improved in the vocational training system;
  - 12] Take action to promote the availability of workable assessment systems including Recognition of Prior Learning for workers in all industries.
  - 13] Encourage governments to introduce initiatives (eg training levies) to encourage those employers who invest in training.