

Flexibility of Qualifications
to cater for the distinctive needs of
Rural and Regional Communities

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Victorian Qualifications Authority

May 2005

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Section One: Executive Summary

This project follows up claims in an earlier VQA scoping study that some existing Vocational and Education and Training qualifications were not flexible enough to cater for the distinctive needs of rural and regional communities.

The scoping study suggested that some enterprises in rural/regional areas were finding training packages to be insufficiently flexible. This appeared to be especially the case where training needs were highly diverse for reasons of the enterprise working across a number of industry sectors or involving varied seasonal tasks. 'However, there was some uncertainty as to the cause of this perceived problem, and the issue remained unresolved as to whether the problem lay in the training package design itself or in failure to properly explore the potential flexibility already existing'. This current project was set in place to establish the nature of the issues through a series of case studies.

This project has used a qualitative methodology to test six case studies that were selected to illustrate one or more aspects of reported inflexibility. Comprehensive evidence was sourced from direct contact, a review of relevant literature, and a study of other documentation relevant to the qualifications mentioned in the case studies.

Two examples of qualification and delivery flexibility are included in the report to illustrate exemplary behaviour. The case studies provide a regional spread in terms of enterprises, employers and providers (Wodonga, Shepparton and Bendigo) as well as examples that are state-wide and/or national in terms of design as well as implementation.

The case studies are:

1. Musical Instrument Making (Castlemaine, state-wide and national)
2. Plumbing (Castlemaine, state-wide and national)
3. Food Processing (Shepparton and state-wide)
4. Motorsports (Wodonga)
5. Conservation and Land Management (North West Victoria and state-wide)
6. Rural Operations (Corryong, state-wide and national)

The project also identified a number of issues that can result in inflexibility but are not a consequence of the qualification. These reported issues are listed and briefly explained in Section Four.

Main themes

The case studies have illustrated that:

- None of the inflexibilities reported to us could be substantiated *as they were initially reported* - they each revealed causes other than qualifications inflexibility.
- Qualification design has not been found to be the issue of primary concern to respondents in rural and regional areas – rather, the issues are either to do with qualifications development or course delivery (Musical Instrument Making)
- Although some examples of inflexibility can be found, training packages and other qualifications once endorsed or accredited, are almost always sufficiently flexible (Rural Operations and Conservation and Land Management)

- Information about the range and flexibility of qualifications tends to be written and formatted for training providers ('insiders') and is therefore unavailable to or inappropriate for enterprises and employers ('outsiders') (Plumbing). This has resulted in courses and ultimately qualifications being driven by providers rather than purchasers. We note that Plumbing and Rural Operations have published explanatory documents for training purchasers; however, availability remains a problem.
- Although cyclical review processes exist that can be used to adjust inflexibilities that are identified in endorsed or accredited qualifications, these processes have been said to be too slow and cumbersome (Rural Operations) and as reported by others, unlikely to address underlying conceptual problems (Schofield & McDonald).
- Exemplary delivery and assessment practice continue to be showcased to employers as well as providers, especially in rural and regional Victoria (Rural Operations and Motorsports)
- The rigid demarcations of some traditional trades continue to be challenged (Food Processing: manufacturing, and Plumbing).
- Enterprises can be pressured to enrol employees in full qualifications even though they require a smaller skills set (Food Processing: Manufacturing). Providers seem to prefer to offer complete qualifications, rather than single units because they are easier to schedule and staff (Musical Instrument Making). Qualifications also provide a culturally entrenched and understandable form of completion or training 'closure'.

Section Two: Flexibility of qualifications to cater for the distinctive needs of rural and regional communities

Introduction

The research topic arose from a 2004 VQA scoping study that sought information from Local Employment and Learning Network (LLEN) managers regarding qualification design and pathways in rural and regional communities. One possible area of assistance that the study revealed was around the degree of flexibility in the selection of competencies specific to the training needs of rural enterprises. No final conclusion was drawn in the scoping study, and so this current project has been asked to examine the nature of the issues about the flexibility or inflexibility of qualifications within this rural and regional context and, where appropriate, suggest recommendations for remedy.

Methodology

Two case studies were reported in the 2004 scoping study. One was noted as ‘hospitality and tourism in the Bright region’ and the other as ‘primary industry and meat processing in the Shepparton region’. Six additional case studies have been selected that are sufficiently representative of the distinctive needs of the wider rural and regional community.

Case studies were identified in a number of ways:

- A letter of inquiry sent to all Victorian LLEN managers from the VQA
- Contact with industry groups (eg Australian Industry Group, VECCI)
- Contact with employers (eg SPC Ardmona, Rod Printz Plumbing)
- Contact with training providers (eg TAFE Institutes)

Evidence and information was gathered from:

- References in the regional *Reviews of the Qualitative data from the 2004 report into Training Needs in Victoria*
- Literature review
- Visits, interviews, telephone calls and emails
- Sourcing relevant packaging rules documentation from the training providers
- Sourcing ANTA materials such as *The AQTF Guidelines for Course Developers* (July 2002) and, *Client Focus: Guidelines for Good Practice* (ANTA 2004)
- Searching training websites such as **training.com** and the National Training Information Service
- Project team meetings (Bendigo and Melbourne)
- The researchers’ working knowledge (both have had a long association with VET qualifications and provision)

(See Appendix A - Evidence gathering for details).

Nothing is included in this report that has not been verified by at least two additional interview or printed sources (and even then caution is sometimes given). The appendix illustrates this claim.

Defining the terms in the topic

Flexibility. There are four key terms (at least) that are embedded within ‘flexibility’. Although they mean different things, three of these terms are used interchangeably and this creates confusion. The four terms in question are: customise, contextualise, package and tailor – the first three of these are frequently used interchangeably. This unhelpful confusion has been recognised by the VQA (see: <http://www.vqa.vic.gov.au/vqa/accreditation/faqs.asp>).

Qualifications’ are both the subject of the study and part of the problem that contributed to the study being identified in the first place. The topic implies that qualifications are the delivery currency. This has not been correct for some time. Modules or units are actually the currency. (See Foyster et al, 1996, *Student flows through Australian TAFE courses*). It is important to point out at the earliest opportunity the difference between the two forms of qualification with which this project deals. One is qualifications that are derived, since 1996, from training packages; the other is qualifications that are state accredited but not wholly from training packages. The latter are widely but incorrectly believed to have been superseded by the former (Schofield and McDonald: 2004). In Victoria for example, a course can be accredited by the VQA and be approved as a training program for an apprenticeship by the Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE).

Distinctive needs of rural and regional communities.’ Although ‘rural and regional’ has become something of a tiresome and hollow sound to people in those communities in recent years, rural and regional areas do have identifiable needs; whether these are distinctive to the point of being unique or are not present in urban areas, is moot. Blom and Clayton (2003) include a well researched

‘... range of factors which act as significant barriers to the effective delivery of training packages and accredited training in rural locations. These are: thin markets, geographical isolation, difficulties in accessing skilled teachers and trainers, negative influence of ‘outsiders’, limited work place opportunities, and lack of promotion or coordination of training within communities.’

Reported inflexibilities. Through the case studies, eight types of inflexibility affecting qualifications have been reported and/or identified.

1. Bureaucratic inflexibility
2. Conceptual or cognitive inflexibility
3. Developmental inflexibility
4. Assessment and workplace assessment inflexibility
5. Packaging inflexibility
6. Integration inflexibility
7. Delivery inflexibility
8. Industrial inflexibility

These reported inflexibilities are explained briefly in section four.

Section Three: The case studies

Two possibilities were mentioned in the scoping study and were therefore identified as requiring follow-up by the VQA. Both have proven **not** to be case studies:

- * Hospitality and tourism in the Bright region
- * Primary industry and meat processing in the Shepparton region

Despite extensive attempts to follow-up respondents involved in the hospitality and tourism (Bright) example, it is not possible to report any evidence of issues of concern. The comment in the scoping study about qualification inflexibility could not be verified.

Follow up with the second possibility revealed that the issue of qualifications flexibility to meet the potential needs of niche agri-business precinct in the Strathbogie/Euroa area ‘...had been resolved as far as it would be at that time’ (J. Hippersley, email 26/4/05, GMLLEN). The issue had been discussed as a possible future scenario and still remains in that category. In the same email J. Hippersley notes the following results:

Key players shared information regarding current and future needs eg Dookie College and GOTAFE both offer some courses and the Innoven Centre will develop courses based on customer need. The Principal of the local Secondary College has focussed VET on local need. The Shire has put in place an economic development officer. Dennis Gunning produced a discussion paper that has been forwarded to the key local people The ACE provider has run a course on small business management responding to local needs.’

There are no outstanding matters to proceed on with this case study.

The six further case studies are:

- 1. Musical Instrument Making**
- 2. Plumbing**
- 3. Food Processing (Manufacturing)**
- 4. Motorsports Training**
- 5. Conservation and Land Management**
- 6. Rural Operations**

CASE STUDY 1: Musical Instrument Making

Attempts to develop a qualification for a niche market

- 1.1 In this case study the issue was the lack of accredited training qualifications to a niche, cross-industry occupation. It illustrates the developmental difficulties or impediments faced by an enterprise whose work is not currently covered by a training package or other qualification and foreshadows problems for other new and/or emerging industries that fall outside any existing qualification.
- 1.2 Musical Instrument Making is defined as the making and repairing of stringed, woodwind, brass and percussion instruments. In Australia the industry is made up of a small number of mixed income operators predominantly in the stringed segment of the industry. Musical Instrument Making falls outside any existing training package and there is no state or nationally accredited qualification. Training therefore, is either via one-to-one (master-pupil) tuition, organised workshops or some other ad hoc arrangement. Most practitioners have either come from overseas or have travelled overseas for training. The potential to provide inter-enterprise training is further constrained by the absence of initial industrial and/or training qualifications. An example was when an experienced Victorian employee was prevented from conducting training interstate because he had no industry qualification. Because the industry is small (an estimate 450 employers and a slightly larger number of employees nationally) there are few job opportunities and because there is no training available there is no career path for new entrants. The industry is said to be growing slowly ('on the healthy side of quiet'), has a high 'feel good' quotient and considerable cultural significance. There is unanimous industry desire for nationally recognised training.
- 1.3 Enquiries over a number of months by a range of people about the development of accredited training were made (eg Regional Development Officer, Goldfields LLEN manager, a Business Development manager from Bendigo Regional Institute of Training, the Light Manufacturing Training Authority - LMTA). No financial assistance stream was available. The LMTA prepared a Musical Instrument Making and Repair Sector Report that placed Musical Instrument Making in the furniture making industry with a low priority in regards to the allocation of developmental funds.
- 1.4 Bendigo Regional Institute of Training advice failed to identify the option of a qualification being developed and accredited through the VQA as the basis for apprenticeship training (at least in Victoria). Whilst this significant omission suggests a lack of system knowledge, the major obstacle faced by the Musical Instrument Making remains the absence of funds to support development. At the time of writing, efforts to support qualification development for Musical Instrument Making have stalled. Any qualification development is dependent upon the discovery of a source of funds (probably in excess of \$40,000).
- 1.5 Until a funding source is discovered, efforts by employers within Musical Instrument Making to develop a qualifications and employment pathway for new (and existing) employees can proceed no further. The developmental problems faced by the MIM may well be the same for other new and emerging industries.

This case study illustrates reported inflexibilities (refer to section four):

- **Developmental inflexibility:** the absence of funding for niche industries
- **Conceptual (or cognitive) inflexibility:** incomplete advice regarding qualifications options

CASE STUDY 2: Plumbing

Acquiring training for plumbers in regional Victoria

- 2.1 This case study is included because it is representative of training qualification provision in a licensed, closely regulated industry. The issue is a lack of qualification flexibility when employers require or desire an atypical skill set.
- 2.2 Our case study respondent delivering plumbing services in a small country town has structured his business, and the training of his apprentices, around the prevailing Victorian registration / licensing regulations and relies on his local (regional) training provider to service the training of the (generalist) apprentices in the traditional manner. During our contact he recognised that he lacked the necessary information to question the current training provision system. He was interested to know more about the opportunities for recognition of on-the-job training skills acquired, and the possibilities for reducing the off-the-job attendance time. It was clear that his understanding of the options available to employers within the training system was quite limited.
- 2.3 The structure of the training package and the qualifications nested within it does provide some flexibility. At Certificate Two, provision is made in the training package for specialist training in the fields of Metal Roofing and Cladding, and Urban Irrigation (watering and sprinkler system installations). Some dissatisfaction is evident in relation to the Metal Roofing qualification since other states have recognised the relative lower risk nature of this work, and allowed “semi-skilled” (Certificate Two) workers to be qualified for just this work. However, these qualifications are not recognised by the plumbing industry regulatory authorities in Victoria. The Metal Roofing & Cladding Association and BlueScope Steel have been lobbying in Victoria for this right to be extended here.
- 2.4 To become a plumber in Victoria an apprentice must complete a Certificate Three level qualification that includes traditional basic plumbing training, and leads to registration that allows the apprentice to work in the industry. In order to become a licensed plumber (with the capacity / authority to sign compliance certificates necessary for any job over \$500 in value) the trainee must complete further Certificate Four level units, which co-incidentally must be paid for as fee-for-service training.
- 2.5 The inflexibility built into this qualifying structure goes largely unchallenged by employers or training providers since both have grown up under this system, and for whom a closed industry is the norm. In this regard the matter of ‘rural and regional communities’ is somewhat irrelevant to this case study. As with other industries, smaller enterprises tend towards generalisation of skills, except where individuals operating as sub-contractors may specialise in a narrower field. Larger plumbing enterprises are more likely to employ specialists, using a sub-contractor system. This is particularly evident in the construction industry, and would have an impact in the plumbing field in relation to roofing and cladding.

This case study illustrates reported inflexibilities (refer to section four):

- **Bureaucratic inflexibility** in a very closely regulated, licensed trade.
- **Industrial inflexibility** due to stringent union demarcation practices.

CASE STUDY 3: Food processing (Manufacturing)

Attempts to multi-skill tradesmen

- 3.1** The issue in this case study was the employer's desire to have cross-industry qualifications for some staff. It illustrates how poor or incomplete advice can send an enterprise (even quite a sophisticated one in this instance) down a less than satisfactory qualifications path.
- 3.2** SPC Ardmona is an Australian icon in the food processing industry. Coca Cola Amatil has recently acquired the company. The company would like to have at least some of their tradespersons multi-skilled (eg electricians who can be fitters and plumbers) so that they are able to follow design, installation and maintenance processes through from 'go to whoa!' The reported qualifications inflexibility related to two things: the first was a perceived necessity for a person with one trade to commence any subsequent trade training 'from scratch'; the second was the relevance of the option that had been 'sold' to the company as the only way of up skilling their electricians – the Instrument Technicians course from RMIT.
- 3.3** In the first instance, all Australian RTOs are legally bound via the Australian Qualifications Training Framework (standard 8) to offer Recognition of Prior Learning (or Recognition of Current Competence) assessment to all enrolees – including qualified tradespersons.
- 3.4** In the second instance there are two responses. Investigations through OTTE suggest that the company's needs would be better served if some of their tradespersons were assessed against the standards in a different training package than the one being used. The clearest example is the electricians. If SPC Ardmona Electricians were qualified from within the Metals and Engineering Training Package they would have Electrical Fitting built into their primary trade training and could proceed to additional and seemingly more appropriate qualifications within the same training package – 'direct credit transfer is available'. However, it appears that the company's electricians have been trained from within the Utilities Package, which does not have the same range of subsequent options although there is still commonality between units of competency. This apparent training misdirection could be explained as follows: if an enterprise or an individual makes enquires of an RTO about training for an 'electrician' they will usually be sent to the Electrical (Utilities) Department. Such misdirection underpins our suggestion of a need for system users to have access to better information about the availability and appropriateness of courses. The second response is that we suspect that the Instrument Technician course does not provide the required skills set.
- 3.5** As noted above, these purported qualifications inflexibilities disguise more fundamental problems including an entrenched industrial demarcation culture at the company that guarantees the status quo regardless of any qualifications flexibility and an award structure that cannot deal with employees with multiple trades

This case study illustrates reported inflexibilities (refer to section four):

- **Packaging inflexibility**
- **Industrial inflexibility:** demarcation issues preclude cross trade work
- **Delivery inflexibility:** credit transfer possibilities may not have been communicated to the employer

CASE STUDY 4: Motorsports

The prerequisites for flexible training in a niche industry ¹

- 4.1 This case study exemplifies flexibility of the relevant training package to meet the training requirements and the factors that need to come together to develop qualifications for a niche ('new and emerging') industry.
- 4.2 Prior to this course being developed, no accredited Motorsports training existed in Australia and there was no career path for motor sports technicians. Once the course of study was developed at Wodonga Institute of TAFE, it became subject to existing student management, timetabling and room-allocation systems. For various reasons (tradition, operator habit or preference, perceptions of system inflexibility, fear of audit, and so on) these systems do not react speedily (or enthusiastically) to radical ideas that fall outside conventional practice.
- 4.3 An example of a radical idea is the 'workplace' for Motorsports. This was both the controlled environment of a workshop and the stressful and dynamic environment around racing, rallying and testing. Workplace assessment therefore meant race day assessment. Students have to apply (transfer) their newly acquired knowledge and skills to a variety of machines in a range of live situations. This application pays no heed to terms or semesters. For the Motorsports industry, workshop-based technical competence is not enough. The industry demands students have race environment experience and that they achieve beyond 'competency' especially in terms of speed, responsiveness and problem solving. This means that delivery and assessment have to be thought of holistically. Final assessment is summative and project based rather than by individual or groups of competency units. This approach presented difficulties for the Institute's results reporting system and the home department's assessment recording practices.
- 4.4 A number of critically important aspects have made the Motorsports program successful and sustainable. The list includes:
- the innovation especially in student assessment
 - the flexibility of the Automotive, Retail Service and Repair Training Package enabling the 33 competencies and 5 Motorsports qualifications to be accredited
 - the support of all stakeholders, from concept through to implementation,
 - funding support to support qualifications development
 - the availability of Institute development and other support staff
 - the perseverance of the program instigator.
- 4.5 This case has '... pushed the boundaries of flexible and holistic delivery and assessment methodology ... and put pressure on ... reporting of results, timetabling teacher loads, student supervision and tracking of student contact hours ...' (Strauch: 2005). Its success in these areas (areas that have obviously stopped others) means that Motorsports is one of a few innovative ideas that has progressed to a sustainable program at Wodonga Institute of TAFE.

This case study illustrates FLEXIBILITY (refer to section four):

- **Development** of qualifications designed to meet industry needs
- **Delivery** in the workplace, in accordance with industry standards
- **Assessment**

¹ This example is courtesy of Kerry Strauch and is adapted from her recently completed Masters exegesis: see References).

CASE STUDY 5: Conservation and Land Management

Acquisition of diverse qualifications over a wide geographic area.

- 5.1 This case study arises from critical comments made by Parks Victoria representatives, as reported in the South West Area study (OTTE: 2004). In this report it is alleged: “Unwelcome changes to some Training Packages have meant some statutory bodies no longer access TAFE for training, for instance Parks Victoria.” We were unable to trace the specific informant to discuss the criticism, but resolved to pursue the matter through the North West Regional office of the Department of Sustainability and Environment, with assistance from a training provider (Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE). Discussions with Department of Sustainability and Environment staff confirmed that the Conservation and Land Management Training Package is sufficiently flexible to enable individuals and local work-groups to complete qualifications designed to meet their operational needs.
- 5.2 In this case study the rural and regional community consideration is very relevant. Many of the people employed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment live and work in very small rural and regional locations and therefore have geographical limitations on their opportunities for training. In small rurally located disparate work-groups, training needs do not always match cohort sizes previously preferred by training providers. The long-standing practice of group-based delivery tends to reduce the elective options available to meet specific enterprise requirements. An ‘in confidence’ example was revealed in this case study. In this example, a provider’s delivery requirements overrode an employer’s need for individualised training.
- 5.3 This training package consists of six qualifications ranging from Certificate One to Advanced Diploma, divided into eight specialist streams. Packaging rules allow for the mixing and matching of electives that extend the core units into very relevant qualifications for the workplace, and include the capacity to import electives from other relevant training packages.

This case study illustrates reported inflexibilities (refer to section four):

- **Delivery inflexibility** whereby training providers may have filtered course availability to match their own economic needs and cohort-based training preferences.

CASE STUDY 6: Rural Operations

Flexible delivery of the Rural Operations training package.

- 6.1 This case study illustrates the **flexible** use of the Rural Operations Training Package to meet the needs of young people in the Corryong area.
- 6.2 Corryong fulfils most of Blom and Clayton's (2003) list of factors that act as significant barriers to effective training delivery in rural and regional locations. It is remote, and rural operations are seasonally dependent. From a RTO's point of view, it is difficult and expensive to service.
- 6.3 Although it is acknowledged that there is still room for more delivery flexibility, what happened illustrates that where there is a training package with flexible packaging rules being implemented by a person with a sound conceptual grasp of competency based assessment, good negotiation skills and the confidence that what is being done meets the requirements of the AQTF, anything and everything is possible.
- 6.4 Flexibility is demonstrated by the following examples:
- Skill and employment needs were identified for the area and relevant units of competency were selected and clustered around these needs. Units were imported from other training packages - in this case Horticulture and Conservation and Land Management.
 - Course sessions were scheduled to avoid periods of high labour need and/or seasonal demand.
 - Some course sessions were scheduled on weekends, some at night, and some in week blocks (according to availability).
 - Some content was embedded in or in conjunction with Certificate III course sessions being offered to a different cohort.
 - Where possible core units were integrated into several units and assessed holistically (eg Safe Use of Farm Chemicals was integrated into Treat Weeds).
- 6.5 The flexible structure of Rural Operations makes it a very versatile vehicle for a range of applications in rural and regional areas – and, it is suggested in metropolitan areas as well. For example, if agri-business eventuates in the Strathbogie/Euroa area Rural Operations would provide the ideal qualifications base. Already Victoria's niche mushroom composting industry has such a qualification (Certificate III in Rural Operations: Mushroom Composting) as does the Blue Gum industry. The Fertilizer industry, when it overcomes some corporate infighting, will also use the same qualification structure.

This case study illustrates **FLEXIBILITY** in:

- **Cognition & Concept (Understanding)**
- **Delivery**
- **Assessment**
- **Packaging**

Section Four: Reported inflexibilities

The case studies have revealed eight types of inflexibility around qualifications.

1. Bureaucratic
2. Conceptual or cognitive
3. Developmental
4. Assessment and workplace assessment
5. Packaging
6. Integration
7. Delivery
8. Industrial

Some of the inflexibilities identified here are being addressed (or have the potential to be addressed) through the work of the recently introduced Industry Skills Councils (replacing Industry Training Advisory Boards). It can be hypothesised that the apparent absence of examples of qualifications inflexibility unearthed during this project results from providers' reluctance to push the boundaries of either delivery or assessment with the result that 'no news is good news'.

1 Bureaucratic

A good example of this type of inflexibility is the slow speed of qualification review. It was observed by one respondent to the Rural Operations case study that bureaucratic complexity (attributed to ANTA) meant the review of the *Rural Production and Amenity Horticulture Training Package* took in excess of two years. This respondent also felt that (ANTA) 'pandered to' and reflected the demands of heavily unionised sectors (eg Manufacturing, Engineering and some traditional trades) and that this approach or response hindered the potential flexibility of qualifications in other less unionised sectors (eg farming).

Another example of bureaucratic inflexibility is the way that enquiries through the recommended **training.com** portal about packaging rules for any training package, lead the enquirer not to the packaging rules but to a provider. This is puzzling and irritating because it precludes, for example, an interested employer from becoming well informed before approaching a provider. In other words the website design does not reflect, as might be expected, a demand or purchaser/user driven approach. Schofield and McDonald (2004) make a similar point in Working Paper 5 (See 5.3: *User Information*).

2 Conceptual (or cognitive)

Inflexibility resulting from a lack of understanding of the fundamentals of qualifications derived from training packages is a significant problem. At a regional level the Musical Instrument Making Case Study illustrates the problems that result from a lack of system or qualification knowledge or understanding by people from whom advice is sought.

During our enquiries, we were handed two examples of attempts by industry sectors to assist potential purchasers through the complexities of the relevant qualifications.

The plumbing industry whilst not the best example of flexibility, at least has taken steps to make sure that employers are clear about the training that is available to apprentices. Likewise, Rural Skills Australia has prepared a comprehensive guide prepared to assist purchasers of training in related industry sectors (See: *Rural Skills Australia* n.d).

3. Developmental

Musical Instrument Making illustrates the development impasse faced by industries for which no qualifications currently exist. It is unclear how this inflexibility can be overcome, short of a fund of money being set aside for this express purpose. It is unlikely that rural and regional TAFE Institutes will have sufficient discretionary money to invest in speculative course development, and private RTOs are unlikely to see such development as part of their core business. The Australian Industry Group (AIG) has recently funded the development of a Technology Cadetship. It may be that industry associations are the source of funds to break the developmental impasse.

As noted in Musical Instrument Making, this developmental issue has the potential to cause problems for new and emerging industries where, by definition, no qualifications infrastructure exists and no national industry body (such as the AIG) exists.

4. Assessment - including Workplace Assessment

In their Working Paper 1, Schofield and McDonald observe that '*... competence (and therefore competency-based training and assessment) appears on the surface to be a deceptively simple concept but, theoretically and in practice, that simplicity melts away to reveal conceptual complexity*' (Working Paper 1, p4). Notwithstanding this caution, they have '*... also come to the view that competency-based training can work for all industries and at all levels ... [if, amongst other things, Units of Competency] ... are used holistically rather than atomistically*' (Working Paper 3, 2004 p3).

The case studies provided two examples of assessment inflexibility. The first was raised as part of the Motorsports case study. This program originated in the Metal Fabrication Department at Wodonga Institute of TAFE which was part of a larger Engineering Department with a 'traditional' (less dynamic and innovative) culture. If the program was to be successful it needed to '*... [push] the boundaries of flexible and holistic delivery [and assessment]...*' (Strauch p.78). This innovative versus conservative tension is a sub-theme in the Masters exegesis from which the example is taken.

The second example came during a conversation with a teacher of horticulture (met as part of the Rural Operations: Corryong Case Study). In this the teacher revealed his considerable uneasiness about his Department Head's use of holistic assessment and integrated delivery (where participants in a lower level qualification join with participants in a higher level qualification for delivery of certain units although their assessment is different). This teacher also complained about the onerous requirements of the AQTF and expressed anxiety about being audited.

The literature review provided two references

- David Rumsey (2003) comments in detail about the simulated workplace issue
- Schofield and McDonald note '*... the inclusion [in some training packages] of (sometimes seemingly unnecessary) workplace-only assessment*' (Working Paper 3) and the perception that this is the only acceptable form of competency based assessment.

5. Packaging rules

Reference has been made to the lack of user friendliness of the two main electronic entry portals to training packages and to the manner in which they lead enquiries to providers (ie. The National Training Information Service and www.training.com.au). In addition to this is the requirement for those seeking information about packaging rules to have to purchase them in CD or hard copy (from Australian Training Products). Whilst this requirement might make commercial sense for ATP, it is counter intuitive for the key to qualification design to be withheld when all the other components are freely available.

Schofield and McDonald in Working Paper 5 deal with this issue at some length although without specific examples (see 5.6: *Training Package qualifications and the AQF*). Rumsey (2003) also deals with packaging rules and offers a number of challenging suggestions to ANTA about future directions.

Where relevant, respondents to this project were asked to assess and comment on any inflexibility resulting from the packaging rules for the qualifications relevant to their use. With few exceptions, all believed the qualifications in question were packaged in an acceptably flexible way. This should not be surprising because few employers or teachers work outside a relatively narrow band of familiar qualifications. So, for example, while the packaging rules for some traditional trades (eg plumbing) appear to be rigidly inflexible to an outsider, to those 'inside' the trade, they are quite acceptable. At the same time, those respondents who use the very flexible packaging rules from Rural Operations, Hospitality or Small Business, are unable to see what the fuss is about.

Two examples of inflexibility resulting from packaging rules were noted as part of case study consultations. The first example (which did not become a case study) was a provider that was attempting to source training for a client with specific needs in health support services (Grounds Maintenance). The available Certificate III contained two compulsory core units that were unnecessary for the client. This inflexibility meant that the client's needs could not be met. The same respondent provided two other examples but these did not hold up under scrutiny. The second reported example was from SPC Ardmona where, it was asserted that packaging rules precluded an atypical training need being met. Discussions with personnel from OTTE confirmed our view that the issue was essentially industrial relations and demarcation issue rather than a problem with packaging rules.

6. Integration

The VQA scoping study from 2004 suggested that some rural enterprises were finding current qualifications insufficiently flexible and that this appeared to be the case where training needs were highly diverse for reasons of the enterprise working across a number of industry sectors or involving varied seasonal tasks. This project has called these inflexibilities 'integration inflexibility' because both suggestions infer that it is the way an industry sector or enterprise is structured, either laterally or vertically, that creates the qualification inflexibility. In June 2003 Chisholm Institute published *Engineering 'in Synch': Science and Engineering Vocational Education and Training Implications of the Synchotron* which sets out the skill needs for the operators and users of the Australian Synchotron as well as those needs of engineers and technicians who will use the wide range of synchrotron-related technologies in research and manufacturing. The report suggested that an integrated approach, rather than a separate streams approach, towards the development of the required skills will be necessary. A scan through this document reveals

various employment and skill needs that are either new or emerging with many falling outside existing qualifications and packaging arrangements.

'Skill sets' is the term given to any bundle of units of competency, usually from a variety of training packages or industry sectors, which do not form an accredited qualification. Such a bundle can be currently be accredited as *Course in ...*. A good example of this need is the skill set required of a driver of a B-Double stock transport. He/she requires skills in: transport and distribution, small business management, agriculture and/or animal husbandry, engineering, and automotive repairs. Many examples occur in rural and regional areas. In farming, skill sets have a long tradition and have been called Extension. This is currently being explored at a national level. OTTE is one contributing party in this matter and is favourably disposed to the concept of skill sets – they just can't agree on a name.

Apart from the Synchotron reference and a need for skill sets to be acknowledged as qualifications, no other examples of integration inflexibility were found.

7. Delivery

Three case study respondents referred to the OTTE Funding Model being an impediment to delivery flexibility. Supporting evidence was sought from these respondents and from a TAFE Institute Associate Director. It is our belief that while a funding model that is based on Student Contact Hours may appear to be philosophically at odds with an assessment based competency system, there are enough examples of it being applied in very flexible ways that are also transparent and auditable, to suggest that it is an excuse used by less than innovative providers, rather than a fundamental cause of inflexibilities.

Another example of delivery inflexibility is where providers' desires to offer a full course or to only run a program if a cohort (usually a minimum of 15) can be guaranteed; override the training needs of a purchaser. (The Conservation and Land Management case study provided an 'in confidence' example, and advice provided as part of enquiries around Musical Instrument Making was based, in part, in the existence of a sustainable cohort of participants.)

The three examples of very flexible delivery are unfortunately not the norm. Whilst other examples of exemplary delivery were reported, they were outnumbered by references to delivery that was driven by Student Contact Hours targets, teachers' allocations and contracts, tradition or department timetables.

We note as a process worth further consideration, the successful trial of a Training Brokerage system within the Food Processing sector in the Bendigo area as part of the State Government's Industry Liaison Agents project (2003-4).

8. Industrial

Industrial inflexibility was revealed in two case studies. In the SPC Ardmona case study two sets of industrial inflexibilities constrained SPC Ardmona from achieving their 'multi skilled tradespersons' objective. Inefficiencies created by rigid demarcations between the various trades represented in the plant resulted in the objective being set. Each trade had specific tasks to perform and cross trade work was prohibited. The second set of inflexibilities relates to the report that trade training subsequent to a first trade had to be commenced 'from scratch'.

In the plumbing case study the same inter-trade demarcations are evident and are further compounded by an overlay of industry regulations.

References (including web based addresses)

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Blom K and Clayton B, (2003) *What works where you are? A snapshot of training in five rural communities*. Centre Undertaking Research in Vocational Education (CURVE), Canberra Institute of Technology

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Strauch K, (2005), *Capturing Innovation: entrepreneurial activity within an educational institutio*. An exegesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of education (Project) from the RMIT

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<http://www.vqa.vic.gov.au/vqa/accreditation/faqs.asp>

<http://www.otte.vic.gov.au/training/cmm/index.htm>

<http://www.serviceskills.com.au/public/content/ViewCategory.aspx?id=3>

<http://www.otte.vic.gov.au/employers/Update%20ResearchProgram.htm>

<http://www.anta.gov.au/print.asp?highLevel.asp>

Appendix A Methodology: Evidence gathering

Case Study	Identify / analyse Training Package & Quals	Identify / analyse Pack. Rules	Identify / consult LLEN	Identify / consult industry / employer	Identify / consult training provider	Other comments
1. Musical Instrument making	None available	N/A	Elsie L'Huillier Goldfields LLEN	Paul Davies ArtsMusic Castlemaine	Terry Dzufer Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE	Also consulted Donna Collier / Regional Development Officer (DIIRD)
2. Plumbing	BCP03 Plumbing & Services Industry TP	YES	Elsie L'Huillier Goldfields LLEN	Rod Printz PrintzPlumbing Castlemaine	Gary Bath Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE	
3. Food Processing (Manufacturing)	MEM98 V4 Metal & Engineering Industry	YES	Jennifer Hippisley Goulbourn Ovens LLEN	Peter Bertolus SPS-Ardmona Shepparton	David Evenis Goulbourn Ovens TAFE	Also consulted Gordon Griffin, Training Advisor Rural Skills Australia
4. MotorSports	AUR99 Automotive Retail, Service & Repair TP	YES	Michelle Kelly North East LLEN	Neil Bates Toyota Team Australia	Kerry Strauch Wodonga TAFE	
5. Conservation & Land Management	RDT02 Conservation and Land Management	YES	Elsie L'Huillier Goldfields LLEN	Amanda Fleming Department of Sustainability and Environment	Tony Misson Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE	
6. Rural Operations	RTE03 Rural Production	YES	Michelle Kelly North East LLEN	Shane Dellavedova Aust. Fertiliser Services assoc.	Peter Verrion Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE	<i>Julie de Hennin</i> Wodonga TAFE Bill Littleson, Mushroom Compost Ind.

Appendix B – Meetings and Contacts

Bright: Hosp/Tourism	Michelle Kelly, Nth East LLEN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter 10/3 • Phone 18/3
	Marg Brown, Corryong Adult Ed Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone 18/3
	Peter Joyce, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 telephone messages left between 18-30/3 (no reply)
	Stephen Moschner, project officer for 2004 VQA Scoping Paper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone 30/3
	Bill Coppinger, Central Ranger LLEN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email 09/3 • Phone 30/3
	Yvonne Evans, Mt Beauty Neighbourhood Centre <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone 18/3
Food Processing (Strathbogie Case Study)	Jennifer Hipplesley Goulburn Murray LLEN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails 10/03, 16/03, 26/04
Case Study 1 Musical Instrument Making	Dianne Collier, Regional Development Vic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting 10/3
	Terry Dzufer, BRIT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting 10/3
	Elsie L’Huillier, Goldfields LLEN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting 16/3 • emails
	Bob Little, OTTE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emails
	Paul Davies, Owner/Mgr, Arts Music (Instrument Maker) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emails • Meeting 6/4
	Tom Woolman, Curriculum Coordinator, BRIT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone calls 11/3, 12/3 & 24/4
Case Study 2 Plumbing (Castlemaine)	Gary Bath Program Co-ordinator, BRIT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails, 12/04, 16/04, 17/04, 21/04 • Meeting 20/04 Rod Printz, Proprietor, Printz Plumbing Castlemaine <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails, 12/04, 15/04, 22/0 • Meeting, 21/04
Case Study 3 Food Processing (Manufacturing) SPC/Ardmona	David Evanis, Mgr Business Excellence, GOTAFE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting 02/3 & 18/4 • Emails
	Peter Bertolus, SPC/Ardmona <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone 18/3 • Emails • Meeting 18/4
	Jennifer Hipplesley
	Bob Little, OTTE, Apprenticeship Section

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails, 27/3, 29/3
	Eddie Hardiman, ditto <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone calls (2) 24/4
	John Scott, ditto <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone call 24/5
	Russell Styles, Metal Fabrication teacher, BRIT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting
	Alan Hampson, ditto <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting
Case Study 4 Motorsports Wodonga	Kerry Strauch, Training and Design Department, Wodonga Institute of TAFE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails and meeting 22/3
	Michelle Kelly, Exec Officer, North East LLEN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone call 18/3
	(Name misplaced), Motorsports Course Coordinator, Wodonga Institute if TAFE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting 22/3
Case Study 5 Conservation & Land Management	Anthony Misson, Program Co-ordinator, BRIT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails 01/04, 26/04, 02/05, 05/05 • Meeting 11/04 Amanda Fleming, Planning Response Co-ordinator Dept. of Sustainability & Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone calls, 04/05 & 05/05
Case Study 6 Rural Operations (Wodonga/Corryong)	Julie de Hennin, HoD, Rural & Hort, Wodonga TAFE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone 18/3 • Meeting 22/3
Other Rural Operations contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fertilizer (ASFA) • Mushroom Compost • Blue Gum Plantation 	Peter Verrion, Program Developer, BRIT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emails, 02/04, 04/04, 05/04, 26/04, 27/5 • Meeting, 11/04 Shane Dellevedova National President, ASFA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email, 28/04 • Phone calls, 29/04, 02/05 Bill Littleson Manager, Scatoplus (Mushroom Composting) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email, 28/04 Andrew Ternouth, Rural Training Consultants of Australia.

Miscellaneous

Heather Hatfield, Ballarat University
Greg Haines, ditto
Craig Rutledge, Aust Industry Group, Bendigo
Gordon Griffin, Rural Skills Aust, Education and
Training advisor for Victoria and Tasmania.

- Emails
- Meeting 2/5

Jeannie Hall, Small Business Answers Officer, Area
Consultative Cttee, North East Victoria.
Walt Healey, ditto
David Collins, Head of Centre, Applied Arts, BRIT
Malcolm MacPherson, Head of Centre, Applied
Science, Rural Studies, and Automotive, BRIT
Elsbeth King, Teacher, Applied Science, BRIT
Michael Langdon, Associate Director (Educational
Programs), BRIT