

Strategic Skills Program – Industry Partnerships

Meeting Skill Needs in Local Government

Final Report

Prepared by the NSW Public Sector ITAB

March 2010



1. Overview of the Project

In June 2007, the NSW Public Sector Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB) was funded \$71,000 by NSW DET (through its Strategic Skills Program – Industry Partnerships) to work with local councils, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), schools and local community agencies to promote vocational education and training pathways, giving new and existing council employees skills to work in areas experiencing shortages. The project focused on the development and recognition of skills in the areas of planning, environmental health and building assessment as well as the creation of school-based traineeships in local government.

The project targeted:

- Mature aged workers interested in moving into council employment in planning or environmental health and building assessment roles. These people may have worked in related industries such as building and construction.
- Local government employees seeking recognition for their current skills or requiring new skills to move into planning, environmental health or building assessment functions. Examples of such employees include administrative staff moving into lower level planning functions.
- School leavers seeking a career in local government
- School students interested in working in local government

The project was managed by the NSW Public Sector ITAB and was overseen by a Project Steering Group. The project's activities focussed on three regions in NSW – the Hunter, Riverina and the Central West.

2. Objectives of the Project

The project had three inter-related objectives:

1. To raise awareness amongst council management, staff and the wider community, of:
 - The existence of VET qualifications as a pathway for entry into the fields of planning, environmental health and building assessment, and towards tertiary education
 - Opportunities available for existing staff (or those that have left local government employment) to gain recognition for current competencies
 - Opportunities for staff to undertake gap training, based on national units of competency; and
 - Opportunities available through school-based traineeships in local government to attract young people into the sector

2. To increase participation in VET training in the areas of planning and environmental health and building assessment by providing access to subsidised training and/or assessment in all units from the following qualifications:
 - Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning)
 - Diploma of Local Government (Planning)
 - Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment)

3. To establish school-based traineeships from 2008 (subject to NSW Board of Studies approval) in:
 - Certificate II in Local Government
 - Certificate II in Local Government (Operational Works)

3. Project Targets

The project aimed to involve a minimum of 20 metropolitan and regional councils and attract a minimum of 50 learners across the various qualifications. Of these learners, it was intended that at least 10 be school-based trainees undertaking Local Government qualifications.

4. Project Activities

The NSW Public Sector ITAB established a Project Steering Group to advise on the project's direction and priorities. It was made up of representatives from the:

- Local Government Association of NSW and Shires Association of NSW
- United Services Union
- Hunter Councils Inc (trading as the Local Government Training Institute)
- TAFE NSW (Riverina Institute)
- Central NSW Councils (known as CENTROC)
- NSW Department of Education and Training

The Group met in September 2007 and March 2008 and have been consulted regularly by telephone and email as various initiatives were implemented in the three target regions for the project, i.e. the Hunter, Riverina and Central West of NSW.

The activities undertaken as part of this project have included:

- A visit by the Project Manager to councils, RTOs, DET STS Centres and school based traineeship coordinators in the Hunter, Riverina and Central Western regions of NSW (August and September 2007). The purpose of the visit was to identify: the extent of interest from councils in the VET pathways targeted by the project; local issues impacting on the take-up of the above training pathways; and resources required to facilitate the promotion and delivery of the program. A report on the regional visits was prepared for the September 2007 meeting of the Project Steering Group.

- The establishment in October 2007 of school-based traineeship pathways in Certificate II in Local Government and Certificate II in Local Government (Operational Works).
- The production of a brochure promoting Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning), Diploma of Local Government (Planning) and Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment). Eight hundred (800) copies were given to the small number of RTOs approved to deliver those qualifications. The brochures were also distributed at conferences held by the NSW Public Sector ITAB, the Local Government Association of NSW and Shires Association of NSW and were disseminated by the United Services Union. The brochure was written in consultation with Project Steering Group members.
- Production of two brochures promoting school based traineeships in local government to employers (councils) and school students (trainees). An initial print run of 5,000 student brochures and 1,000 employer brochures were distributed to school based traineeship co-ordinators, councils and RTOs in December 2007 and a further reprint of 4,000 student brochures and 1,500 employer brochures was issued in June 2008.
- Presentation to the Local Government and Shires Association's network meeting of Learning and Development managers to promote school based traineeships and the new Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment) (March 2008).
- Presentation at two careers information evenings in Sydney, promoting school based traineeships in local government to Year 10 school students (July and August 2008).
- Promotion of school based traineeships at the NSW Public Sector ITAB's conference in September 2008 through the dissemination of brochures and the allocation of a session to school based traineeships. Over 130 delegates were addressed by Lake Macquarie Council who outlined their rationale and strategy for the employment of 8 school-based trainees in 2009.
- On-going liaison with NSW school-based traineeship co-ordinators and RTOs regarding the promotion and implementation of school based traineeships in local government (2007 – 2010).
- Collaboration with the NSW Board of Studies, DET's VET in School's Directorate and various government sectors to establish *Certificate II in Government Services* as a school based traineeship for Aboriginal students. The qualification offers one elective stream for public sector employment, and the other, for local government (January 2009).
- Production of a DVD with Government Skills Australia featuring 6 local government school based trainees and apprentices from Gwydir and Upper Hunter Shire Councils in NSW (October 2008 – April 2009). The ITAB identified and liaised with council participants, co-directed the filming and assisted with the editing of footage. Over 250 copies of the DVD were distributed to all Human Resource Managers of NSW councils, school-based traineeship coordinators, RTOs and key members of the Careers Advisory Network in NSW. A further 300 copies were distributed nationally by Government Skills Australia.
- In July 2009, successfully securing increased User Choice funding for RTOs delivering Certificate II in Local Government and Certificate II in Local Government (Operational Works). Funding levels were adjusted to be commensurate with comparable qualifications as it emerged that the pricing structure was becoming an impediment to the delivery of the

local government qualifications by RTOs. As a result, User Choice funding for Certificate II in Local Government was increased from \$900 to \$1,250 and Certificate II in Local Government (Operational Works), from \$1,000 to \$1,500.

- On-going discussion with the Building Professionals Board regarding their recognition of the Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment) for licensing purposes (2008-2010). The qualification is now a recognised course for the certification of A3 level building surveyors.
- Lobbied Government Skills Australia to include the NSW accredited course Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment) as a qualification in the Local Government training package. After significant delays in progressing the project, it is now one of the 2010 Local Government Continuous Improvement projects for Government Skills Australia.
- Answered an estimated 20-25 telephone and email inquiries from students and mature aged workers interested in undertaking the Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment), the Diploma of Local Government (Planning) or to a lesser extent, Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning)
- Successfully secured funding from NSW DET's Skills Enhancement Program to develop Learner Guides for 4 planning units (3 are new units) that are part of Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning) and Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment). The project also includes updating the 2007 training resources developed under the Industry and Enterprise Training Program to incorporate changes made to planning legislation in NSW in 2008/9.

This project commenced in November 2009 and will be completed in April 2010. Its Steering Committee includes a representative from the Planning Institute of Australia, the professional body representing planners in NSW. Their inclusion helps to strengthen the relationship between the VET sector and professional bodies and raise awareness of para-professional qualifications amongst their members.

- Distributed an on-line survey to students of the Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment) seeking feedback on the course and the training materials. Their comments were useful in validating the style and format proposed for the new planning resources currently under development.
- Met with the University of Western Sydney to raise awareness of VET pathways (particularly school-based traineeships and the Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment) and to explore articulation opportunities with degree programs in environmental health (February 2010).
- Gave a presentation to the HR Managers of the Central NSW Councils on the outcomes of the project which generated further interest and discussion on school based traineeships in particular (March 2010).

5. Project Outcomes

5.1 Uptake of planning, environmental health and building assessment qualifications

Whilst the SSP-Industry Partnership project commenced in July 2007, the impact of promotional activity on student participation can more accurately be gauged from enrolment data in the years 2008 – 2010 (Feb). As Table 1 shows, in 2007 there were 44 enrolments in only the Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning). In addition, Western Institute of TAFE accessed SSP funds in 2007 to deliver a cluster of specialist planning units from the Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning) to 6-8 council employees, and the Local Government Training Institute received SSP funding for a cluster of building surveying units from the Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment).

Since 2008 there have been a total of 94 enrolments across all three qualifications. Despite a fall in enrolments in 2009 (for reasons explained over page), indications are that councils are showing renewed interest in these courses in 2010, based on enquiries received by RTOs in 2010.

Table 1: Enrolments and Completions in Planning, Environmental Health and Building Assessment Qualifications targeted by the SSP –Industry Partnership Project

Qualification	Enrolments 2007	Enrolments 2008	Enrolments 2009	Enrolments 2010 (to date)	Completions 2008	Completions 2009	Completions 2010
Certificate IV in Local Govt (Planning) LGA40704	44	42	9	0	29	13	1
Diploma of Local Govt (Planning) LGA50504	0	3	1	1	0	1	0
Diploma of Local Govt (Environmental Health and Building Assessment) 91337NSW	0	20	10	8	0	6	0

Enrolments in the above qualifications have been from a wide ranging group of councils, as shown in Table 2. The project's target to involve employees from at least 20 metropolitan and regional councils has been exceeded, with enrolments from 47 councils in these para-professional pathways alone. This represents participation by 31% of all NSW councils. As anticipated, take-up of these planning, environmental health and building assessment qualifications has been greater in regional councils where skills shortages are most acute and where staff are required to be more multi-skilled than metropolitan councils.

Table 2: Councils with employees undertaking Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning), Diploma of Local Government (Planning) or the Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment), 2007-2010

Sydney Metropolitan Councils	Regional Councils
Auburn Council	Albury Shire Council
Canterbury City Council	Balranald Shire Council
Hornsby Council	Berrigan Shire Council
Kogarah Municipal Council	Bourke Shire Council
Parramatta City Council	Brewarrina Shire Council
Randwick Council	Camden Shire Council
Wyong Shire Council	Central Darling Shire Council
	Coffs Harbour City Council
	Coolamon Shire Council
	Cootamundra Shire Council
	Deniliquin Shire Council
	Dungog Shire Council
	Goulburn Shire Council
	Griffith Shire Council
	Hay Shire Council
	Junee Shire Council
	Kiama Shire Council
	Leeton Shire Council
	Lismore City Council
	Mid Western Regional Council
	Muswellbrook Shire Council
	Nambucca Shire Council
	Narrabri Shire Council
	Newcastle City Council
	Parkes Shire Council
	Port Stephens Council
	Temora Shire Council
	Upper Hunter Shire Council
	Wakool Shire Council
	Wellington Council
	Wentworth Shire Council
	Wingecarribee Shire Council
	Wollongong City Council
	Wollongong City Council
	Young Shire Council

There are a range of factors that have influenced the patterns of enrolment in these three qualifications during the life of the project.

1. The commencement of delivery of the NSW accredited Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment) in 2008, which met immediate demand from councils who had been seeking such a course since its omission from the Local Government training package in 2004. The funding of the training materials under the IESP program facilitated the delivery of this multi-disciplinary course by the Local Government Training Institute and Riverina Institute of TAFE.
2. The impact of the economic recession in late 2008 and during 2009 resulted in reduced staff turnover across most councils as employees preferred to remain in stable employment. Consequently the severity of skills shortages in planning, environmental health and building assessment was temporarily ameliorated, reducing the need to upskill new or existing staff. In addition, council budgets were under significant pressure which also reduced their capacity to fund training. The economic downturn can partly explain why enrolments slowed

in Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning) and Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment) in 2009.

3. The funding of the Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment) through the Productivity Places Program has greatly improved councils' capacity to pay for this qualification, and it is anticipated there will be a further 37 places filled in 2010 as a result of PPP funding. There is no doubt that access to subsidised training courses has a major impact on councils' participation in VET training.
4. Enrolments in the Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment) were tempered by the on-going deliberations of the NSW Building Professionals Board during 2008-2010 regarding their recognition of the Diploma qualification for licensing purposes. On 1 March 2010, the Minister for Local Government announced the commencement of the state's new system of accreditation for building certifiers in which the Diploma will be one of the recognised qualifications for certification of A3 level building surveyors. This long-awaited decision is likely to significantly increase the uptake of the Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment).

5.2 Feedback on the Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment)

Student Feedback

In November 2009 the ITAB developed an on-line questionnaire that was forwarded to the Local Government Training Institute and Riverina Institute of TAFE for distribution to students of the Diploma. The survey requested feedback on the training materials developed for the Diploma and some general comments on their experience with the course.

Only students of the Local Government Training Institute were sent the questionnaire and 8 responses were received. All 8 students were employed with councils at the time of commencing the Diploma, with only 3 of the 8 remaining in their original role as at December 2009. Of the 5 students who had changed jobs since commencing the Diploma, 3 reported "the course helped a lot", 1 said "my course helped a little" and 1 recorded "my course has no relevance to my new job".

The job titles of all survey respondents are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Job Titles of Diploma Students responding to ITAB survey

Original Job Title Upon Commencement of Diploma	Current Job Title (Dec 2009)	Helpfulness of the course in gaining new position
Technical Assistant/Secretary	Trainee Health and Building Inspector	<i>My course helped a lot</i>
Trainee Environmental Officer	Health and Building Officer	<i>My course helped a lot</i>
Team Leader – Development & Governance Administration	Co-ordinator of Sustainable Development Administration	<i>My course has no relevance to my new job</i>
Trainee	Trainee	<i>n/a</i>
Manager Environmental Health and Building	Manager Environmental Health and Building	<i>n/a</i>
Senior Draftsman	Health and Building Surveyor	<i>My course helped a lot</i>
Coordinator Enforcement	Coordinator Enforcement	<i>n/a</i>
Ranger/Parking Officer	OHS Senior Management Support Officer	<i>My course helped a little</i>

The reasons cited by respondents for enrolling in the Diploma were related to furthering their career, gaining qualifications relevant to the work undertaken in local government or to gain new skills to allow them to multi-skill or work in new areas within the council.

Student feedback on the 2008 training materials developed with Industry and Enterprise Training Program funds were generally very positive, with any criticisms noted for consideration in the development of the 2010 training resources. The Learner Guides were rated as “excellent” by 2 respondents, “good” by 4 respondents and “OK” by 2 course participants. No criteria was rated “poor” or “very poor”. Only one comment was made about the need to simplify the words and descriptions used in the activity questions.

RTO Feedback

The two RTOs using the resources to deliver the Diploma of Local Government (Environmental Health and Building Assessment) were very satisfied with the resources and reported no problems with the training materials. Both supplemented the resources with additional activities, either in a practical workshop environment or for reinforcement of learning.

Both RTOs reported steady demand for the course from councils.

5.3 Uptake of school based traineeships and apprenticeships

Since the project's commencement in late 2007, employment of school based trainees by local government has increased significantly, albeit from a small based of active employers. In 2007, 9 councils were known to be employing or hosting 31 school based trainees across 9 qualifications. In 2010, 24 councils are known to be employing or hosting 47 school based trainees in 12 vocations¹. This represents an increase of 52% in trainee numbers in less than three years and a rise in the percentage of participating councils from 5.9% of all councils in 2007 to 15.8% in 2010.

Table 4: School-based trainees employed in local government

Year	Council	Vocations
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campbelltown City Council (3)** • Great Lakes Council (3) • Guyra Shire Council (1) • Gwydir Shire Council (11) • Inverell Shire Council (1) • Moree Plains Shire Council (1) • Nambucca Shire Council (1) • Sydney City Council (7)** • Upper Hunter Shire Council (3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cert II Business (20) • Cert III Carpentry & Joinery (1) • Cert II Information Technology (2) • Cert II Tourism Operations (1) • Cert III – Hospitality (Western Cookery) (1) • Cert II in Horticulture (2) • Cert II Sport & Recreation (Community Recreation) (2) • Cert II Automotive Services (Automotive Vehicle Servicing – Light Vehicle) (1) • Cert III Community Services (Children's Services) (1)
Feb 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armidale Dumaresq Council (3) • Bland Shire Council (1) • Bourke Shire Council (3) • Campbelltown City Council (3)** • Central Darling Shire Council (2) • Cobar Shire Council (2) • Great Lakes Council (1) • Greater Hume Shire Council (1) • Greater Taree City Council (2) • Griffith City Council (2) • Gwydir Shire Council (2) • Inverell Shire Council (1) • Lachlan Shire Council (1) • Lake Macquarie City Council (5) • Liverpool Plains Shire Council (1) • Moree Plains Shire Council (2) • Newcastle City Council (2) ** • Oberon Council (1) • Singleton Council (1) • Sutherland Shire Council (1) • Sydney City Council (6)** • Tamworth Regional Council (1) • Upper Hunter Shire Council (2) • Wollondilly Shire Council (1) ** 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cert II Animal Care & Management (1) • Cert II Automotive Vehicle Servicing (3) • Cert II in Business (18) • Cert II Civil Construction (General) (3) • Cert II in Horticulture (3) • Cert II in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations) (1) • Cert II Information Technology(4) • Cert II Government Services (Local Government) (1) • Cert II Local Government (6) • Cert II Local Government (Operational Works) (3) • Cert II Sport & Recreation (Community Recreation) (1) • Cert II in Tourism (2)

** These councils are hosting indigenous school based trainees through the Aboriginal Employment Strategy's Group Training Organisation.

¹ The data provided by NSW DET is missing some known school based traineeships, including those employed with Group Training Organisations. The figures quoted above include the missing cases known to the ITAB and data provided by ABL (GTO) and the Aboriginal Employment Strategy's GTO. It is likely the data shown in Table 4 underestimates the true number of SBTs in councils.

As indicated in Table 4, 21 of the 24 councils employing school-based trainees in 2010 are in regional NSW where labour shortages are greatest and there is a stronger imperative from the local community to keep young people in jobs in the region. It is also encouraging to see that of the nine councils with SBTs in 2007, seven continue to support the program in 2010.

The table also indicates that more young people are undertaking traineeships that are targeted to specific job functions or to local government, e.g. Information Technology, Horticulture, Civil Construction, Local Government (Operational Works). Proportionately fewer trainees are now studying the generic qualification *Certificate II in Business* compared to two years ago.

The introduction of the two local government qualifications, *Certificate II in Local Government* and *Certificate II in Local Government (Operational Works)*, along with the Certificate II in Government Services for indigenous students, has resulted in the commencement of 12 school-based trainees since 2009 (three have since left the program). This surpasses the project's target of 10 SBTs in local government qualifications. These 12 trainees are not part of the one intake, but are completing their training with five different training providers across NSW.

RTO Delivery

The school-based traineeship market is now being serviced by more RTOs than two years ago, although shortages of RTOs are still being cited as one of the barriers to the delivery of SBTs. In 2010, the following RTOs were delivering training to school based trainees in local government²:

RTO	Number of SBTs in 2010	Qualification
NSW Department of Education & Training	14	Cert II Business Services Cert II in Horticulture Cert II Information Technology Cert II in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations)
TAFE NSW – New England Institute	6	Cert II Business Services Cert II in Horticulture Cert II Information Technology Cert II Sport & Recreation (Community Rec) <i>Cert II Government Services (Local Government)</i>
Local Government Training Institute	5	<i>Cert II Local Government</i> <i>Cert II Local Government (Operational Works)</i>
TAFE NSW – Western Institute	3	Cert II Automotive Services Cert II Information Technology <i>Cert II Local Government</i>
TAFE NSW – North Coast Institute	3	Cert II Civil Construction (General) Cert II in Tourism
TAFE NSW – SW Sydney Institute	3	Cert II in Business Services
TAFE NSW – OTEN	2	Cert II Business Services Cert II in Tourism
Em-Four	2	<i>Cert II Local Government</i>
TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute	1	Cert II Animal Care & Management
Access Group Training	1	Cert II in Horticulture
Australian Training and Consulting	1	<i>Cert II Local Government</i>
TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute	1	Cert II in Automotive Vehicle Servicing

² Data on RTO delivery to some trainees is unavailable.

5.4 Challenges in increasing participation in school-based traineeships

Despite the project's success in increasing council and student involvement in school-based traineeships between 2007 and 2010, there is still considerable capacity for local government to expand its employment of school-based trainees. Some of the challenges cited by school-based traineeship co-ordinators, council staff and RTOs in making the system "work" for all parties include:

1. Lack of awareness of school based traineeship options by staff in councils, particularly departmental managers. Turnover in Human Resource management staff and line management means promotional campaigns need to be regular to ensure all staff are kept informed.
2. Lack of interest from councils because school based traineeships are perceived to be "too hard" to administer and manage. As demonstrated by the trend between 2007-2010, it is anticipated that commitment to the program will grow slowly as councils trial a small number of trainees and word-of-mouth experiences help to generate greater interest from new councils.
3. The amount of administration and consultation required between parties (the school, council, Australian Apprenticeship Centre, RTO, student, parent, school-based traineeship co-ordinator) can be overwhelming. Employers have requested that the "red tape" be simplified to allow the process to be less complex.
4. Lack of resourcing for school based traineeship coordinators to promote these programs directly to councils. For example, in the Sydney metropolitan region, many of the SBT co-ordinators work part-time so do not have the capacity to "door knock" councils. Often there is minimal or no contact with employers unless there is an explicit need to find a place for a student. Consequently the momentum established through a sector wide promotion is lost if there is no ground-level follow up.
5. The high costs of training delivery for RTOs who are provided with the same amount of funding for training mature aged workers as school aged students. It is the experience of many RTOs that school based trainees require greater levels of contact and supervision, particularly given their age, lack of work experience and other study commitments. The relative high cost of training delivery is a major consideration for RTOs who can be asked to work with trainees a large distance away. High costs and an often challenging client group, create a disincentive for RTOs to become involved with school-based traineeships when the potential market is spread throughout NSW. School based traineeship co-ordinators have reported several cases where traineeships have not proceeded due to their inability to find an RTO willing or able to deliver the training, particularly in regional areas.
6. The specialist nature of some qualifications also provides challenges in finding an RTO who is prepared to deliver the qualification as a school based traineeship (for reasons discussed in point 5, above). There have been numerous reported cases of councils and students having to accept alternative qualifications because of their inability to find an RTO to deliver the preferred qualification. Even in metropolitan areas, it is not desirable for school aged students to travel large distances to an RTO, so unless the RTO has multiple trainees, it is usually not feasible for the RTO to travel to the student.

This problem highlights the need to provide RTOs with greater incentives for delivery of school based traineeships, particularly in qualifications where there is a "thin" supply of RTOs.

7. Recommendations for Further Action

Whilst the project has met the objectives and targets established at the outset, there remains considerable scope to further increase council and student participation in these entry level and para-professional pathways. As the effects of the economic recession lift, skills shortages will remain a major concern for local government as employees regain the confidence to move between employers and the public and private sectors. The impact of its ageing workforce will also not diminish and councils will need to become more pro-active in attracting young people to their workforce.

There are some important lessons learned from this project which can help to drive future promotional activities in local government and encourage greater participation in these entry level and paraprofessional training pathways.

1. The need to run regular information and promotional campaigns for all parties – council staff, school based traineeship coordinators and RTOs. Whilst awareness of the various training pathways was undoubtedly raised by the project, knowledge disappears with staff turnover and is easily forgotten over a short period of time. It is important that people working at the local level (e.g. school based traineeship coordinators) also have heightened awareness of local government as a potential employer of school students, thereby raising the profile of this sector as an employment option.
2. The need to target professional associations and professional staff in raising awareness of new VET pathways (eg school based traineeships and para-professional qualifications) so that knowledge is not just held with HR sections of councils.
3. The need to better promote linkages between school-based traineeships and post-school employment and training opportunities in local government. For example, school-based trainees can be targeted for their interest and potential employment suitability in skill shortage areas of engineering, planning or environmental health. Post school VET or tertiary education can be offered by councils as an employment incentive to students following Year 12.
4. The need to better promote Group Training arrangements as an option for the employment of school based trainees by councils. Under such a model, councils are the host employer with the administrative responsibilities remaining with the group training company. Group training arrangements appear to be working effectively for the employment of indigenous school based trainees (through the Aboriginal Employment Strategy) and should be more extensively promoted to councils.
5. The importance of establishing regional networks between RTOs, councils, Australian Apprenticeship Centres, Group Training Organisations, Industry Partnership Brokers and other relevant parties to drive initiatives at the local level. More can be achieved when there is mutual understanding of roles, responsibilities and capabilities of the key individuals and organisations working locally. Networks also help to sustain initiatives once funding assistance is removed.
6. The importance of strengthening articulation arrangements between VET pathways and tertiary education. The attraction of and demand for para-professional qualifications will increase if linkages are created with tertiary qualifications (ideally the award of credit into degree programs). Formal linkages offer advantages for the higher education and VET sectors and the industries they service. More work needs to be done by all parties to ensure

that recognition and articulation arrangements are firmly established and communicated to industry.

7. The need for NSW DET to review the funding available for school based traineeships to more adequately reflect the true costs associated with delivering the program to school students, particularly in regional areas. Changes to funding arrangements would provide a greater financial incentive for RTOs to work in this market and allow them to provide a higher quality product which is not so dependent on a distance mode of delivery.