



AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNION

SUBMISSION TO THE

CLIENT AND STUDENT VOICE INDIGENOUS SUB-GROUP CONSULTATION

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1. Background

- 1.1 The Australian Education Union is an Industrial and Professional organisation representing approximately 165, 000 members nationally. Membership of the AEU includes teachers and educators working in TAFE, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers and educators. We welcome the opportunity to submit our thoughts on National Indigenous Advisory structures for the VET system to the Client and Student Voice Action Group, through its Indigenous sub-group.
- 1.2 This paper will address the key questions as outlined in the discussion paper, but will also address issues which have not been canvassed in the questions.

2. Issues not canvassed in the questions

2.1 Client and Student Voice

- 2.1.1 The AEU believes that the terms ‘client’ and ‘student’ are used homogeneously in the paper, when they are not the same thing. Students are not necessarily clients of the system, and clients are not necessarily students. Further, the title of the paper refers to the development of a ‘client and student voice’ in the system, which serves to exclude a range of important stakeholders who are neither ‘clients’ nor ‘students’. Teachers and educators working in the VET system would fit in to this category, as would Indigenous elders who play an important role in many TAFE colleges around Australia. Neither group would be considered ‘clients’ or ‘students’ of the system, yet both have a strong role to play as stakeholders in Indigenous VET.
- 2.1.2 The title is the antithesis of the 6 national priorities for action, which attempt to articulate a holistic vision for Indigenous VET.

2.2 Objectives and Principles

- 2.2.1 There are a range of inconsistencies in the policy framework which page 6 of the Consultation Paper states should be ‘taken in to account as a base’ for the development of the principles to guide the operations of the proposed new Indigenous advisory arrangement.
- 2.2.2 It may seem to be ‘splitting hairs’ to cover policy structures which have already been developed and endorsed, however, unless the initial premise of a new advisory body is taken in to account, the focus of such a body is less likely to be ‘sharp’ and it runs the risk of trying to be all things to all people and consequently nothing to most.
- 2.2.3 For example, the first two objectives outlined in the *Framework for the New National Training System*: “engage with students; and ensure the views of all students, particularly disadvantaged students, are considered in training planning and delivery”; are micro and operational in their intent, and the last, “support ongoing high level advice on the needs of all learners, particularly people with a disability and Indigenous Australians, towards improved training outcomes”, is macro and strategic.
- 2.2.4 Any proposed advisory model will need to be clear at which level it is supposed to operate – if the intention is to develop an advisory structure that covers all three objectives then the structure will need to be more flexible than the one currently proposed. Perhaps mechanisms to meet the first two objectives are better established

at local and regional levels, through avenues such as student councils, rather than at a national level? An alternative is the establishment of an Indigenous VET student Roundtable, which would operate in a similar manner to the New Apprenticeships Roundtable, or the inclusion of Indigenous students in the National Indigenous VET roundtable.

- 2.2.5 The proposed principles to underpin the new advisory arrangements do not completely support the achievement of the aforementioned objectives, and in some places are completely contradictory. For example, objective 2 states that the views of students, particularly disadvantaged students, are considered in training planning and delivery, yet principle 1 outlines that the needs of business and industry should drive training policy, priorities and delivery now and in to the future.
- 2.2.6 The contradictory nature of these principles occurs because in many cases, the needs of students and business and industry are not in concurrence. What happens for example, if the training needs of a particular group of Indigenous students are focussed on conservation and traditional land management practices and the needs of industry are focussed on development? How does a national Indigenous advisory council for the VET sector reconcile these competing interests in the provision of nationally focussed, strategic advice?
- 2.2.7 The AEU believes that it is not the role of a new national Indigenous VET advisory council to reconcile competing interests between Indigenous and Industry groups, yet as stated above, the current principles and objectives which underpin the new system establish a parameter in which such an episode may occur.
- 2.2.8 Therefore the broad role of the new advisory arrangements as outlined on page 6 of the consultation paper, including the premise that the activities of the new advisory arrangement be *wholly* consistent with the principles of the New National Training Framework should be urgently revisited. As stated above, the role of a national body should be strategic and macro (objective 3) and therefore new mechanisms for engaging students (objectives 1 & 2) should be further explored.
- 2.2.9 The broad role of such a group is clearly defined under the section which begins ‘the new advisory arrangement should...’ The only point that the AEU wishes to raise here is the use of the term ‘have an intellectual leadership role in Indigenous training reform.’ We believe that the term ‘strategic leadership’ better encapsulates the role of the group better than the term ‘intellectual leadership’, as intellectual leadership, by nature of its definition is individualistic, not collective.
- 2.2.10 The AEU supports the premise that any new advisory group must build upon the work of the former AITAC, using Partners in a Learning Culture – The Way Forward (PILC - TWF) as a basis.

3. Issues canvassed in the questions

3.1 Role

What should be the key roles of a national training advisory arrangement for Indigenous people?

- *The AITAC model proposes a range of functions (p7) – are these appropriate? What other activities might the advisory mechanism undertake?*
- 3.1.1 The role of the group(s) is largely dependent on the advisory structure that is adopted. The AITAC model proposes a tripartite structure, with each part of the structure having separate, but inter-related roles.
 - 3.1.2 Commenting on the proposed structure, the AEU envisages that the role of the National Indigenous VET Leadership Group (NIVLG) would be strategic in focus. People on this group should be well connected to the National, State and Territory VET systems and in positions of influence within these systems. The two national co-chairs should be well connected to both industry and the national VET system and have positions of influence within these spheres. Consideration should be given to the co-chairs representing both industry and unions, in recognition of the important role that both organisations have to play as Industry partners in VET.
 - 3.1.3 The role of this group should be to develop strategic advice against existing policy frameworks, including PILC – TWF and *Shaping Our Future 2004 – 2010*. The importance of people being well connected to State and Territory VET systems is for the purpose of monitoring and reporting at a State and Territory level against outcomes established in the multi and bi-lateral agreement making processes. This group should also have the power to recommend the establishment of Action Groups to progress work on key issues.
 - 3.1.4 The importance of the tripartite structure should not be underplayed if this model were to be adopted. The AEU is supportive of the structure of the National Indigenous VET Leadership Group *only* if it is a part of a broader structure which includes the operation of the Indigenous VET roundtable. If the tripartite structure is not adopted, then the AEU would strongly support the adoption of one national committee that is membership based, similar to the new National Quality Council (NQC), which brings together the key stakeholders in VET to oversee the VET quality system.
 - 3.1.5 The National Indigenous VET roundtable is a crucial part of the decision-making structure and should be further developed as another decision-making mechanism. In the proposed model, it is the only structure that has the capacity to draw together all key stakeholders to discuss issues and recommend actions which are crucial to improving the progress of Indigenous peoples within the VET system. The role of the National Indigenous VET Roundtable should be as outlined by the terms of reference on page 12 of the consultation paper. Additional consideration should be given to the group being able to establish and lead ‘flag-ship’ projects in identified areas of need, for example improving the rate of apprenticeship commencements and completions, with the idea of promulgating successful models across the country.

- 3.1.6 Consideration should also be given to including students in the structure of the National Indigenous VET roundtable, or the development of a separate National Indigenous VET student's roundtable, which could have a similar role to that of the New Apprenticeships Roundtable. This would cover the issue of matching the underpinning principles and objectives to the activities of the structure, a concern identified earlier in this paper.
- 3.1.7 The Strategic Coordination and Support Unit is also a crucial structure in this model. One of the issues with the former AITAC was the amount of operational work covered by members of the committee. It is imperative that any advisory structure that is developed is supported by an appropriate structure within the VET bureaucracy. This unit would also have the role of liaising with State and Territory Departments responsible for VET and DEST's Indigenous Education group.
- 3.1.8 The other component of the structure that is mentioned under the heading, *Involvement and Participation in Decision Making*, but is not altogether clear within the proposed model is the need for Indigenous people to be engaged in other high-level decision-making bodies in the new VET structure. For example, the NQC has an equity representative who is an Indigenous person.
- 3.1.9 The AEU supports the principle of specific Indigenous representation on key decision-making bodies in the new VET system. Where this is not able to occur, for example on the National Senior Officials Committee, a member of such a committee should be given responsibility for the Indigenous VET portfolio and should work closely within the new structure to ensure effective lines of communication and accountability.
- *Who should the advisory mechanism engage (eg. students, community, teachers, employers, industry, researchers)?*
- 3.1.10 The AEU strongly supports the involvement of TAFE educators, in particular Indigenous TAFE educators in decision-making processes. We emulate this commitment and support through our decision-making structures, where we have a national TAFE Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee to advise the Union on Indigenous matters in TAFE.
- 3.1.11 If the proposed structure as outlined in the AITAC model is adopted, then it has the potential to engage a wide range of stakeholders through project work, the development of partnerships, and in particular, through the work of the National Indigenous VET Roundtable. Members of all groups in the proposed structure should and must engage stakeholders through their work across all levels of the system.
- 3.1.12 If the advisory structure is made up of one group of people only, then consideration must be given to ensuring a range of stakeholders are engaged in new ways.
- 3.1.13 Regardless of which structure is adopted processes for engaging a wide range of stakeholders must be built in to the operations of the group, both through their terms of reference and in a budgetary sense. If not, the group will be in danger of appearing removed and thus irrelevant to the business of Indigenous VET.

- *Who should the advisory arrangements provide advice to? The proposed AITAC model suggests that the advisory arrangement should provide advice to the Ministerial Council. Is this appropriate?*

3.1.14 As the Ministerial Council is the key national decision-making body for VET, this body is appropriate. However, as the whole of the new structure will be housed under DEST, consideration should be given to advice going to the Ministerial Council through the appropriate Federal Minister, in this case, the Minister for Vocational and Technical Education and perhaps the Minister for Education.

- *How will the mechanism ensure it balances engagement with a broad cross-section of stakeholders with the provision of effective leadership and focussed advice?*

3.1.15 This is a challenge to all advisory bodies. There are a range of factors which contribute to the attainment of the balances outlined in the question above. The first of these is structural. Getting the structures of a new advisory mechanism correct will ultimately facilitate the attainment of balance. Secondly, ensuring that appropriate roles and responsibilities are attributed to appropriate people and groups within the structure is essential. Thirdly, making sure that there are appropriate resources allocated to the work of such a group is also vital to the ability to achieve balance. Fourthly, determining appropriate accountability and reporting mechanisms are crucial, particularly determining the appropriate indicators to report on.

3.1.16 The AEU believes that the model proposed by the former AITAC is an appropriate structure to facilitate better community engagement. It will also sharpen the strategic focus of the work of the group, as those people on the NIVLG should be able to influence the implementation of the national strategy at a State and Territory level. The Indigenous Roundtable structure must be considered as a component of the decision-making structure, and not just another mechanism for consultation.

3.1.17 The AEU believes that balances will not be achieved unless there is a willingness of decision-makers within Government to implement advice and resource this implementation effectively.

- *How could the advisory arrangement progress the six priorities identified in the revised Blueprint?*
- *What capacity should the advisory mechanism have to enable the monitoring and evaluation of activity initiated through the Blueprint?*

3.1.18 The core business of any advisory arrangement should be to progress the 6 priorities identified in PILC – TWF, as this document has been endorsed by the Ministerial council.

3.1.19 The AEU believes that these priorities have not yet been progressed to *Blueprint* or implementation stage, and believes that a Framework for Action (rather than a Blueprint) needs to be developed in order to underpin the progression of the new priorities. The development of such a framework should be the role of the new advisory structure, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders. There should be no more than 3 priority actions underneath each of the 6 priority areas. Any more than this becomes less than manageable.

- 3.1.20 There are a number of areas to consider in the progression of priorities, including the systemic levels which should be targeted in order to gain improvement. For example, the priority “Improving funding frameworks” is a matter for Government at the Ministerial level and thus should be progressed through a strategic approach with the relevant funding decision-making bodies. On the other hand, priorities such as “Culturally Appropriate Product Design and Development” should be targeted more at the provider level, and could be done through the initiation of national best practice pilot projects, which could be funded and documented with the view to setting up communities of best-practice in Indigenous VET. Levels of responsibility for these activities should be identified within the Framework for Action document.
- 3.1.21 Monitoring and evaluation of activities should be conducted against the Framework for Action in conjunction with relevant stakeholders. The AEU supports an evidence-based approach to development and monitoring, which, again is inclusive of all stakeholders. This should build upon the work done by the former AITAC in their national research partnership with the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). The National Indigenous VET research strategy should continue to be supported as a mechanism in the development, promulgation and monitoring cycle, as it has provided rich data which can be used to assess the transmission of good practice. Partnerships should also be established with other research bodies such as the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Participation and Research (CAEPR) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

3.2 Scope of Activity

What activities should the Indigenous advisory arrangement undertake?

How could activities be prioritised?

- *How will the advisory arrangements address a specific focus on training outcomes within the context of the broader Australian Government reform agenda impacting on Indigenous clients within which the national training system operates?*

- 3.2.1 This should be progressed using the 6 priorities for action, which are already endorsed, and the development and monitoring of a Framework for Action as mentioned above.
- 3.2.2 Another role of the new structure should be the provision of advice to guide the Indigenous VET accountabilities to be built in to the multi and bi-lateral agreement-making processes which will be conducted between the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments.
- *How will the scope of the advisory arrangements balance a focus on training outcomes with work to achieve broader whole-of-life goals such as effective transitions, personal development and sustainable employment outcomes?*
- 3.2.3 Again, the scope of these arrangements should be mapped out in a Framework for Action which is endorsed at Ministerial level. Research tells us that there are many indicators of VET system success which are currently unmeasured in the national VET statistics collection. Projects such as the National Survey of Indigenous VET students, conducted by the NCVER in 2005, are able to add rich qualitative data to the available statistics, which is why the National Indigenous VET Research Strategy should be supported in to the future.

3.2.4 Partnerships with other Government Departments, such as DEWR at a national level, and their counterparts at a State and Territory level should be encouraged.

- *What is the best way for the arrangement to relate to work that already takes place in the training system for Indigenous clients and students (eg. local consultative/advisory groups; national, State and Territory Indigenous programs and projects; annual reporting)?*

3.2.5 This is essentially a question about the bureaucratic structure which will support the new advisory structure. Mapping of this work should be conducted by the proposed Strategic Coordination and Support Unit and invitations to hold discussions with particular groups should be forthcoming. In relation to annual reporting, it is essential that the Strategic Coordination and Support Unit has an effective relationship with the Indigenous group structure within DEST and that sharing of information, data and knowledge be actively facilitated.

3.2.6 Data collection within the VET system is not without its problems, and the ability to disaggregate Indigenous data, particularly in the areas of VET staffing for example, need to be dealt with urgently. Existing data collection and reporting structures must be improved in order to assist in the ascertainment of issues. One avenue for this is again, the continuation of support for the National Indigenous VET research strategy, which was initially established as a partnership between the NCVET and the former AITAC.

3.2.7 The AEU believes that the Strategic Coordination and Support Unit, along with the DEST Indigenous groups should have substantial input in to the National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training. As this reporting mechanism already exists, it is practical to use it as a basis for Indigenous VET reporting. Reporting against Indigenous VET outcomes should also be built in to the roles and responsibilities of other VET groups in the new structure.

- *What other emerging issues may the advisory arrangements need to take into account?*
- *How can we ensure the arrangements are flexible enough to address emerging issues?*

3.2.8 The Federal Government's reform of the Indigenous Australia portfolio area is an emerging issue which will impact on Indigenous VET. Advice provided to the Prime Minister through the National Indigenous Council (NIC) in relation to lowering the age of entry (to the age of 12) in to VET programs for Indigenous students in some remote communities; and the reform of the CDEP program to better align training and employment outcomes; are two recent issues which point to the need for greater dialogue and coordination between the new Indigenous VET advisory structure and other Indigenous affairs portfolio areas, as both of these issues have been ongoing programs of work for the former AITAC. There are a range of other emerging issues which stem from the reform of the Indigenous affairs portfolio area, including the intersection of VET programs with Shared Responsibility Agreements and the linkages of training outcomes to job creation and employment.

- 3.2.9 There are a range of ongoing issues which also need to be prioritised. For example, the concept of Vocational Learning in the lower years of schooling, as opposed to VET in schools is a possible alternative to the VET in schools proposal put forward by the NIC.
- 3.2.10 Potential emerging issues are too extensive to list here, however, history has told us that many of the issues in Indigenous VET are ongoing issues, such as the participation of Indigenous peoples in higher level courses; the lack of Indigenous teachers in the VET sector; Indigenous VET completion rates; and adequate funding of programs.
- 3.2.11 The AEU believes that the 6 priority areas in PILC TWF are broad enough to encapsulate both ongoing and emerging work which may need to be considered by the new advisory structure. Ensuring that there are effective linkages and appropriate action-based mechanisms in place should enable this to occur.
- 3.2.12 Another facility available to the Advisory mechanism is the ability to recommend the formation of an Action Group, which under the new structure is formed for a specific purpose, with a specific time-frame. The AEU believes that this capacity will better enable the advisory mechanism to deal with emerging issues as it will allow a broader range of people with expertise to be coopted for a specific purpose.

3.3 Operation

What will the advisory arrangement look like? How would the advisory arrangements work?

- *What arrangements could be made to engage with students/learners and clients?*
 - *In the AITAC model one of the proposed measures for engaging clients, students, and learners is through an annual National Indigenous VET Roundtable. Is this an effective way of engaging student and client views?*
 - *What other ways could an advisory arrangement engage and consult students and learners?*
- 3.3.1 As mentioned previously, the AEU supports the idea of a National Indigenous VET Roundtable and believes that consideration should also be given to including students in the structure of the National Indigenous VET roundtable, or the development of a separate National Indigenous VET students' roundtable, which could have a similar role to that of the New Apprenticeships Roundtable and conduct specific projects to consult with and engage Indigenous learners.
- 3.3.2 There are a myriad of ways that an advisory body can engage with students and learners, including through research, meetings, projects and structured consultations. The AEU believes that prior to consultations taking place the purpose of such a consultation should be firmly and clearly established. Without a clear understanding of why students would be consulted in a process and what impact the student consultation might have on such a process, there is a great risk in consultations becoming an activity that is run for the sake of it.
- 3.3.3 The AEU supports the involvement of students in such processes, but believes that these processes must be structured in such a way that the most benefit is received from a process at the national level. Thus, the AEU supports a model similar to the

National Apprenticeships Roundtable, where student activities are project specific and focussed on achievable solutions, which can then be built in to the system.

- 3.3.4 As stated previously, The AEU believes that the Strategic Coordination and Support Unit, along with the DEST Indigenous groups should have substantial input in to the National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training. As this reporting mechanism already exists, it is practical to use it as a basis for Indigenous VET reporting. Reporting against Indigenous VET outcomes should also be built in to the roles and responsibilities of other VET groups in the new mainstream structure, for example the National Officials Committee.

What links should be made to other advisory bodies or organisations?

- *How might state and territory level advisory mechanisms inform the national advisory arrangements?*
- *How could the advisory arrangement make links to whole of life and whole of government initiatives?*
- *What should be the reporting arrangements for the advisory mechanism?*
- *In operational terms how will the advisory arrangement inform and influence training planning and delivery?*

- 3.3.5 Links to other advisory bodies and organisations could be made through the National Indigenous VET Roundtable, as well as through the National Indigenous VET Leaders group in their own States and Territories. To the best of the AEU's knowledge, there are no VET specific Indigenous Advisory groups operating at a State or Territory level. VET business is usually conducted through the AECG/IECB network.

- 3.3.6 It is crucial that the proposed structures are able to accommodate the voices of all stakeholders. If the tripartite model proposed by the former AITAC is not adopted, then the next best way to support inclusion and linkages is through a nationally focussed representative body, similar to the National Quality Council.

- 3.3.7 In relation to the arrangement informing and influencing training planning and delivery, whatever the new structure looks like, it must be able to perform a role of significant influence within the VET system. Enabling such a group to report directly to the Federal Ministers and the Ministerial Council is one of the mechanisms to ensure that decisions are endorsed and implemented from the highest levels of the system. Ensuring that there is an action plan (or Framework) endorsed by the Ministerial Council for implementation across Australia is essential. This can be done through the bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreement making process. Again, reporting arrangements can be covered through the VET chapter in the National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training and also through mainstream VET reporting processes.

- 3.3.8 For any advisory structure which sits at a national level to have influence on training planning and delivery at a local and/or regional level, there needs to be commitment and resourcing. The PILC MTR Executive Summary (ANTA 2004) found that progress against the objectives and actions within the strategy was 'gradual, patchy and uneven' and that there needed to be 'renewed emphasis' on the strategy across 'many parts of the VET system' (p. 1). The AEU believes that PILC TWF can

produce this renewed emphasis, particularly if supported by the structures proposed by the former AITAC in this discussion paper.

- 3.3.9 The proposed model enables a greater range of stakeholder engagement than previous models. It also enables an opportunity for Indigenous engagement in broader mainstream VET decision-making bodies. The notion that the Indigenous VET leadership group be people who have skills and influence within their state and territory systems enables the decision-making structures to permeate from a national level to the states and territories, where the decisions about training planning and delivery are made. States and Territories have a further impetus to deliver against Indigenous VET targets if they are tied to the bi-lateral and multi-lateral agreements and form a part of the resource negotiations.
- 3.3.10 The AEU believes that if Indigenous VET outcomes are to be a priority of the national VET system, then they must be resourced as such. Specific funding should be quarantined to support the implementation of initiatives under PILC – TWF.
- 3.3.11 The AEU also believes that in terms of influencing training planning and delivery, there needs to be a greater focus on teacher professional development and training. This could be done through a series of national projects focussed on improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Recent research commissioned by the AEU has shown that teachers believe that undertaking Indigenous studies as a part of their pre or in-service training has had an impact on their ability to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Herbert, 2005). The AEU believes there is much benefit in ensuring that VET teachers are also able to access Indigenous studies as a component of their pre and in-service training. This is one example of where the new Indigenous Advisory could focus activities and advice, with the potential of improving planning and delivery.

Who should be involved in the advisory arrangements once they have been established? The AITAC model suggests members from each state and territory, nominated by their respective Minister responsible for training.

- *How should membership of the advisory arrangement be determined?*
- *Who should lead the advisory mechanism (eg. Indigenous leader, industry)?*
- *How can we ensure that both Indigenous women's and men's voices are heard as part of the advisory arrangements?*

- 3.3.12 Again, the AEU sees the proposed AITAC advisory model as more than the National Indigenous VET Leadership Group (NIVLG). Unfortunately the way that this question is structured implies that the decision-making structure is based only upon the NIVLG. The AEU does and will not support a model that is solely based around the NIVLG structure. Our support for such a structure is premised on the introduction of the tripartite model, which includes the NIVLG, the National Indigenous VET roundtable, and the appointment of Indigenous people to key decision-making structures within the mainstream VET system, all supported by a Strategic Coordination and Support Unit.
- 3.3.13 If the proposal is adopted with only the NIVLG, then it runs the risk of locking out many of the key stakeholders in Indigenous VET, who are valuable contributors to ensuring that the 6 priority areas in PILC – TWF are achieved, including Unions, employer bodies and Industry Skills Councils.

- 3.3.14 Determination of the process for membership of each of the key groups in the proposed structure can only be done once the structure is finalised. For example, if the AITAC model is adopted as outlined in this submission above, then the AEU believes that it is appropriate for the NIVLG to be nominated by their State and Territory Ministers with responsibility for Training. The two national chairs (proposed as an Indigenous VET leader and an Industry leader) should be nominations of the Federal Government, with input from key VET stakeholder groups. Membership of the National Indigenous VET roundtable should be based on a representative model, where key stakeholder groups are asked to nominate representatives to participate. Membership of the Indigenous VET leaders who sit on other key advisory bodies should come from the Roundtable structure, assuming that members of the NIVLG are also members of the Roundtable. If the AITAC model is not adopted in total, then the AEU supports the adoption of a representative model, similar to the National Quality Council, where nominations are put forward by key organisations.
- 3.3.15 Ensuring that a gender balance is achieved will ultimately be the responsibility of people who put forward nominations and people who make the final decisions about nominations (the AEU envisages this to be the Federal Minister). Gender balance considerations should be written in to the Terms of Reference for all groups.
- 3.3.16 Ultimately these decisions will be made in a political climate and as such, it is important that the membership of the group represents a cross-section of Indigenous interests in the VET sector. It is important to ensure that there is a balance of people representing key stakeholder groups, and that the Terms of Reference clearly state the role of the group(s) is to represent the interests of Indigenous VET to Government, and not vice-versa.

What kind of resources and support structure will the advisory arrangement require to undertake its work?

- *Is the proposed co-ordination/support unit from the AITAC model an appropriate structure to undertake the work of an advisory arrangement?*
- *Should accountability and reporting for the advisory arrangements be independent? Could a government department undertake this role?*
- *How will resourcing of ongoing broad based and culturally appropriate consultation be factored into the funding of the advisory mechanism?*

- 3.3.17 The AEU believes that the proposed Strategic Coordination and Support Unit is the appropriate structure to support the work of an advisory arrangement.
- 3.3.18 Reporting and accountability mechanisms should be built in to mainstream reporting and accountability mechanisms, and in to the National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training.
- 3.3.19 Resourcing of the advisory arrangement should be budgeted for effectively and appropriately. The AEU suggests that, in a similar vein to other National Initiatives, that the new advisory structure be funded from the National Initiatives section of the Skilling Australia's Workforce Commonwealth –State Agreement (2005 – 2008), or another appropriate fund source. It should not be drawn from the existing Indigenous Education budget within DEST.

4. General

What lessons can be learned from past and current advisory mechanisms for Indigenous clients in the training, education and related sectors?

- *What has worked and why?*
- *What has not worked and what improvements are suggested?*

- 4.1 There are a range of complexities in the establishment and operations of National Indigenous Advisory mechanisms. The PILC MTR Executive Summary (ANTA 2004) indicated that there were a range of issues in relation to the *Involvement in Decision-making* and *Indigenous Advice* Strategies, some which pertained to PILC. The MTR identified that there was good but patchy progress of the appointment of Indigenous people to decision-making bodies in ITABs (now Industry Skills Councils at a national level) and RTOs. It also identified that there were some obstacles to effective participation by Indigenous peoples and suggested that these limitations could be overcome with effective induction and professional development strategies. Within the proposed AITAC structure, the National Indigenous VET roundtable could be an opportunity to facilitate these people making connections.
- 4.2 Ignorance of the strategy across the whole sector was another issue identified, and the suggestion for improvement was the development of a communication strategy. This could be facilitated by the Strategic Coordination and Support Unit proposed in the AITAC model.
- 4.3 Data collection, specifically statistical data collection is another area which was identified as needing improvement. The AEU believes that this issue is being dealt with under the NCVET/AITAC partnership which produced the National Indigenous VET Research Strategy. This strategy should continue to be supported.
- 4.5 Finally the MTR determined that there needed to be a more concerted effort from providers to engage Indigenous people in decision-making structures at a local level. There are ranges of ways that this outcome could be achieved. The proposed AITAC structure allows for the establishment of projects and programs through either the NIVLG and/or the NIVR. States and Territories should also be encouraged to establish Indigenous VET advisory structures in order to better facilitate a linkage between work that is occurring at a State and Territory level and at a National level.

References

ANTA (2004) *Partners in a Learning Culture Mid-Term Review – Final Report Executive Summary*, Australian National Training Authority, Brisbane