

Research Today

RESEARCHERS' MAGAZINE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN VET RESEARCH ASSOCIATION



Editor: Erica Smith
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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Message from the AVETRA President

This edition focuses on capacity building in VET research and this comes at an important moment in the history of Australian VET research. It is over 15 years since the initial wave for promoting a "critical mass" of VET researchers emerged from the report *No Small Change* in 1992. The benefits of this initial surge of VET research and the cohort of VET researchers that emerged in the wake of the report has placed Australian VET research well by international standards. One of the recommendations of *No Small Change* was the proposal to form a professional VET association and this helped create the momentum for AVETRA's foundation in 1997. Aligned with the success of the growth of VET research in Australia was the presence of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in 1992 as well. It has had a vital role in scaffolding and supporting a viable and sustainable VET research community through all its activities.

Many of the capacity building initiatives described in this edition are evidence of the need for a renewal process to recruit a new wave of researchers into the next 15 years. The processes of renewal and revitalisation are important for AVETRA as well as the continued regeneration of the organisation will bring new researchers to the VET research community. AVETRA is using some of the Ray Barker Fellowship funds to assist this process and it will complement NCVER's commendable efforts. The future success of any recruitment process is dependent on adequate resources in VET research and this remains an issue that needs urgent attention. The review of the NCVER research contracts in 2005 identified the need to create additional resources to build the dimensions of research at a time of critical skills shortages. Unfortunately many of the recommendations for action were identified as being done within existing resources. Yet as we prepare for another federal election there is a silence about research and innovation in the VET sector, and the allocation of additional resources will be a challenge for AVETRA into the term of the next government whoever it may be. This edition of *Research Today* points to a way forward for a new generation of VET researchers.

Peter Kell
President AVETRA

Message from *Research Today* editor

I would like to thank all who contributed to this special edition of *Research Today*. We welcome contributions from members of AVETRA to *Research Today*, which is published twice a year. Contributions should preferably be 500 words or less and should focus on VET researchers, researching and the impact of research. Please send your contribution to me at esmith@csu.edu.au, or if you wish you may phone first to discuss your idea, on 02-6933 2087.

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NCVER's initiatives to build researcher capacity

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Vocational education and training (VET) is an essential part of Australia's education system. In the face of Australia's skill shortages, the ageing workforce and a highly competitive labour market, the VET sector is being asked to be increasingly flexible and responsive, particularly to changes in industry direction and government policy. This is where VET research is vital. It not only provides a sound basis for informed policy decisions, but gives the sector feedback on its performance and offers guidance about what works and doesn't work in vocational education and training across Australia.

The conditions impacting on our labour market are also having an effect on our pool of VET researchers, and as such, this pool is small and growing smaller. There are fewer centres dedicated to VET research and few new researchers starting their careers in VET. The need to build the VET sector's research capacity is becoming increasingly evident.

For the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), the need to build this capacity was identified in the 2006 review of its services. The review showed that NCVER tended to rely on a small number of experienced researchers to provide research for the National VET Research and Evaluation Program and suggested working to broaden this pool. In response, NCVER is implementing a range of strategies to strengthen research capacity in the VET sector. The broad scope of these initiatives includes: developing new researchers' skills; enabling those who are already working in the VET sector to undertake research; attracting established researchers from other disciplines; and providing opportunities for established VET researchers to share their knowledge and expertise.

NCVER started the ball rolling with its New Researcher Awards. These were presented to seven new career researchers at NCVER's 2007 'No Frills' conference in Alice Springs. The recipients secured free travel and accommodation to attend the conference and present their research. Following the conference, these new researchers have been invited to have their papers peer reviewed and published by NCVER. This new series of 'occasional papers' will be published early next year.

New VET researchers are encouraged to apply for the 2008 New Researcher Awards. The 2008 'No Frills' conference will be held in Tasmania, at the Newnham university campus in Launceston. It will be a great opportunity to meet, and share research, with other VET researchers. The conference will also include a dedicated stream of workshops focused on improving research skills. Details about applying for a New Researcher Award will be posted on the NCVER website and circulated in

NCVER's fortnightly newsletter as the conference approaches

NCVER is also funding a range of projects, practical in nature, that are specifically aimed at increasing the research ability of those in VET sector. The projects will support and develop new career researchers and provide practical ways to develop the research ability of people already employed in the VET sector. These projects are really the centrepiece of the building researcher capacity initiatives as they will start to develop capacity immediately. The funding round for these practical projects closed in early November and submissions are currently being short listed. Keep an eye on the NCVER website for further details about these projects.

To encourage staff currently employed in the VET sector to consider doing their own research, NCVER is establishing a residential research fellowship program. The aim of these fellowships is to give VET sector staff practical research experience by spending three to six months working with NCVER on an in-house research project. The fellowships may also be suitable for students undertaking masters level qualifications who would like to use NCVER's resources and expertise to develop their own projects. Expressions of interest for the fellowship will be sought in early 2008.

NCVER is also initiating a scheme to co-fund research scholarships for students studying in VET, or a VET related field. If you would like to discuss the possibility of co-funding a PhD or masters student through these scholarships, please contact Francesca Beddie on (08) 8230 8699 or francesca.beddie@ncver.edu.au.

These are some of NCVER's immediate plans for developing research capacity in the VET sector; but, NCVER hopes to continue widening the scope of these initiatives. Future initiatives may include sponsoring a 'Researcher of the Year' award as part of the Australian National Training Awards; supporting VET mentors for new researchers; and, in cooperation with AVETRA, supporting new researchers by running workshops and presentations on research design and methodology at both NCVER and AVETRA conferences.

To remain up-to-date with NCVER's current and future plans to build researcher capacity, subscribe to NCVER's fortnightly newsletter, NCVER News at:

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/news/subscribe/subscribe.html>.

Mentoring new researchers

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One of the greatest assets a new researcher can have is a good mentor who can provide the support, counsel, constructive criticism and friendship which a researcher needs. Undertaking research is an unpredictable and capricious journey which often defies and confounds the researcher, no matter how careful the planning and execution of the chosen methodology.

The role of the mentor is to provide support in times of setbacks and adversity; to listen to nascent ideas and strategies in order to help shape and apply them; to play devil's advocate in decision making and the formulation of conclusions and outcomes; to enrich reflection; to share the excitements and disappointment which are part of the research journey; and to comfort and reactivate motivation in times of trial. This is a tall order, especially as most research mentors are voluntary and receive no material rewards for their role.

New researchers fall into a number of categories. Firstly there are those who are researching as part of their post-graduates studies. These are the main group covered by this article. Others are new researchers because they have recently taken up an academic position. The third group are those who become part of a research project which is being undertaken by a group of researchers, sometimes from within a single workplace but, more often, from across a number of workplaces. In addition there are some individuals who undertake research as the sole researcher.

All these groups will benefit from a mentoring relationship. New researchers, within an academic environment, will be able to seek a mentor from within their own workplace or participate in a number of informal mentoring relationships, seeking critical friends to assist them in different aspects of their research. Those in the third category may use the research team as a source of rich mentoring relationships or the team leader may act in that role to the less experienced members of the research team. Sole researchers will need to use their professional networks to seek mentoring support. Regardless of where the mentors come from, they will need to have the necessary attributes to counsel rather than tell, listen without premature interjection, criticise constructively and to value the unflowering of new talent.

It may be suggested that mentors are unnecessary in post-graduate academic research. Surely, what I have described falls within the role of the researcher's academic supervisor? Technically this may be true. However, for student researchers, especially those undertaking postgraduate research whilst working full-time, the relationship between them and their supervisor(s) embodies an implicit

hierarchical separation which results in a power differential. Thus research students seek their supervisor's approval of their work and, whilst this may engender the development of a supportive, caring relationship, students will often be loath to entrust their formative thoughts and ideas to their supervisor or to admit to their feelings of confusion and inadequacy.

This is where the mentor provides valuable assistance without interfering in or diminishing the quality of the supervisor-student relationship. The mentor becomes a third party to the research/learning process, empowering the student to more confidently present their ideas to their supervisor, enabling the student to rehearse their arguments with a non-threatening listener and to discuss their work within a non-political relationship.

My experience in mentoring people undertaking vocational education and training (VET) academic research projects has clearly demonstrated the need for a research mentor. For instance, I recently agreed to mentor a Masters-by-research student who was having difficulty with her supervisor. The supervisor had no experience of the VET context and my mentee, immersed within this context, was becoming frustrated by criticisms which she did not understand. So my role as mentor became that of a two-way translator or intermediary. Because I was able to reframe the supervisor's comments into a contextual language and form that the mentee could understand, she was able to understand what the supervisor wanted. I could then help my mentee to translate her response to the supervisor's requests and suggestions into an academic format readily understood by the supervisor. This enabled a resumption of a student/supervisor relationship which had all but fractured. It also enabled my mentee to recognise that the difficulties had arisen from contextual misunderstanding and not through personalities.

A second example where I acted as a mentor to a vocational education and training practitioner is also concerned with the centrality of context in research. In this instance, my mentee sought me out because he was finding that his supervisor was not able to provide critical analysis of his research outcomes because he did not understand the VET context from which they arose. Thus the role I assumed was that of contextual expert leaving the supervisor to work with the student on methodological issues. This worked extremely well as I was able to give the student constructive feedback on his contextual descriptions and interpretations while his supervisor provided expert feedback on his research issues.

As VET researchers, it is too easy to forget the misunderstandings which can occur when researchers on VET do not have a strong working knowledge of the context of VET. It is in these situations that an effective mentoring relationship can provide a supportive framework for new

researchers investigating vocational education and training issues.

Mentoring is a complex phenomenon. So also is the process of finding one's feet as a new researcher. With an ageing workforce, we need to find ways of developing our new researchers. One of the effective strategies to achieve this aim is for us, as more experienced researchers, to be prepared to support less experienced researchers. This is, of course, what post-graduate supervisors do. However, given that most post-graduate supervisors have little experience of working and learning within a VET context, then we should be embracing opportunities to engage in mentoring relationships with our new VET researchers. They will learn much with us as their critical friends, but we will learn more.

Interviews with recipients of NCVET New Researcher Awards

As explained in Suellen Priest's article above, NCVET funded seven new researchers to attend its 2007 conference and will be doing the same again in 2008. The seven award recipients for 2007 were contacted for interview. The new researchers who responded are: John Ward (JW), Denise Bell (DB), Sarah Sutcliffe (SS) and Toni-Maree Pettigrew (TMP). Their insightful responses to the questions are given below and will prove inspiring to other new researchers.

▲ What is your job role, and does research form part of your daily work?

JW: Research occupies almost all of my daily work life. I currently have two jobs. I work part time at Chisholm Institute of TAFE (where I am responsible for all the research needs of the institute) and I also work as a part time Research Fellow at the Australian Council for Educational Research. Although I have a strong statistical background, my specialist quantitative skills are in the area of psychometrics, and I teach introductory and advanced psychometrics at Swinburne University. I have a special interest in the application of psychometric skills to the measurement of competency and competency development. My award was granted for research supported by, and undertaken at Chisholm Institute.

DB: I have had a range of job roles over the past few years, from Senior Manager Teaching and Learning Services in a TAFE Institute, Project Manager for the Victoria TAFE Development Centre to current new job of Deputy Director for a branch in the Defence Materiel Organisation. Throughout all these roles, I continue to use research skills, knowledge and techniques in order for me to more effectively meet my roles and responsibilities.

SS: I am currently working as a research officer with CURVE (Centre Undertaking Research in Vocational Education) at the Canberra Institute of Technology. Research does form part of my daily work which at the moment is based on the quantitative surveys CURVE undertakes to meet CIT's reporting requirements as an RTO. These include surveys of students, employers, staff and graduates. I have also been fortunate enough to be involved with the consortium research program: *Supporting vocational education and training providers in building capability for the future*, albeit only in a supporting role; putting together news items for the consortium website and newsletters.

TMP: Position: Senior Program Officer – Learning Technologies Professional Practices, Product Services – Industry & VET Policy

Research: Research is an important function of Learning Technologies role. Quality research helps inform professional development activities.

▲ Please tell me about the research project (the topic and your research methods) on which your NCVET paper was based

JW: We wanted to take a fresh look at the issue of student satisfaction with VET courses. So we developed and tested a psychometric instrument designed specifically to measure this concept. We then applied a number of multivariate statistical techniques to the data, thus allowing us to examine and dissect the structure of VET students' perception of satisfaction with VET educational services. At the centre of this multivariate methodology was the use of a Structural Equation Model, the results of which informed us that satisfaction with VET courses was a complex, multi-dimensional concept. The unravelling of this complexity has provided guidance to VET planners and policy on how to target and improve those services that have the greatest impact upon student satisfaction.

DB: My research topic titled *Organisational Planning and Performance Integration in a TAFE Context* was related to my PhD studies. The presentation offered an overview of the research undertaken as part of a change management strategy to assist two TAFE Institutes to address and improve their planning culture. The research project was to initiate and implement a planning and performance framework, using quality assurance continuous improvement and change management principles that embraced organisational learning and development processes and practices, across the two institutes.

The action learning action research methodology used a project management approach. The research explored the interface between practitioner, researcher and planner working in an organisation. The project entailed an ongoing process of reflection, planning, reviewing and improvement as the researcher and the institution worked to improve workplace practices at the macro level as well as within a subset of the organisation.

The project's cycles of activity undertaken with reference to the literature provided a rich resource to bring together the elements of research and practice. The connectivity of these experiences and the new knowledge and understanding gained, highlighted the importance of the emergent planning, implementation and sustainable principles and practices identified as a result of this project. The project was an intervention in an organisation's development at a point in time. It identified strategies needed to be flexible to accommodate emerging divergent external influences with staff commitment and participation essential at all stages of change management practices. The importance of strong leadership in such a process emerged as a critical aspect of the project's outcomes and the research findings.

SS: My research project, *Getting on [line] with it...surveying student experiences*, came about in response to the issues involved in converting CIT's *Student Experience Survey (SES)* from a paper-based survey, that enjoyed a relatively high response rate, to a less certain online version. The project afforded me the opportunity to reflect on our survey in relation to the issues raised in the research literature. Essentially the project explored how the similarities, differences and ideas identified in the research might guide future practice.

TMP: The research project was a joint project with Susan Todhunter and myself.

Research Project: The overall research study was guided by the question of 'what are the perceptions of the teachers and students as to the potential use of web conferencing technology, the barriers and the implications for teaching and learning?' Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE was selected as the research site. SQIT is the most geographically dispersed TAFE Institute of Queensland and comprises nine geographically dispersed campuses servicing an area similar in size to the State of Victoria.

Methodology: As the scope of the research was focused on understanding, rather than explanation, of the perceptions of the participants,

the research design used a multi-method approach to measure participants' perceptions by means of a survey, and to gain qualitative data by means of open ended comments.

▲ **How did you feel before presenting your work at the NCVET conference?**

JW: It was a great honour to be given this award. So I guess I felt just that... honoured.

SS: Nervous and excited; I had a story to tell.

TMP: Nervous. I would have found it a lot more daunting if I had done it alone. I was fortunate enough to work collaboratively with Susan Todhunter who co-wrote the paper. As a new researcher working beside someone more skilled who can mentor, guide and support during the research is invaluable. I have learnt so much from Susan and have a much better understanding of research and ensuring the integrity of research is maintained throughout the project. Thanks Susan.

▲ **Did you receive useful feedback at the conference, and what did you do with it?**

JW: I received a lot of useful feedback. I was really helpful to immerse myself in an environment dominated by researchers in VET. It is very rare that I get that opportunity. Much of the feedback that I did receive was incorporated into my thinking on the structure of student satisfaction. Indeed, much of this feedback has helped me in the writing of a journal article on this topic (to be published soon).

DB: During my presentation I involved those in attendance with an activity to draw on their experiences. The activity posed two questions, these being:

- What are the processes you would use to **plan** for a new innovative project in a VET workplace?
- What are the processes you would use when **implementing** a new innovative project in a VET workplace?

The responses from these two questions were collated and provided in the paper. The experiences of the participants identified some key synergies that further confirmed the research emergent findings.

SS: My presentation was after a lovely curry lunch on day 2 of the conference, so I thought my audience would all fall asleep; fortunately they didn't!! The feedback was very positive, the audience was engaged, interested and had their own experiences to add. It highlighted the complexity and diversity of the issues which will be useful when we embark on our next SES. The

other very valuable part of the conference experience was being a beginning researcher and presenting to an audience of established senior VET researchers. It was daunting yet exciting, which then led me to wonder how do I become one of those established senior VET researchers; how do I find the opportunities to build the skills I need to get there?

TMP: We received valuable feedback at the conference, which was a great confidence builder for both of us. We had a suggestion to publish the paper, which we are currently investigating but would like to extend the paper to include the final phase of the project.

▲ What are you going to research next, and what do you need to help you?

JW: We are in the middle of setting up a new research project that focuses upon the quality of teaching in VET. Our research into student satisfaction informed us that, at the centre of this notion of satisfaction, is the concept of teaching and learning. An initial review of the Australian literature on this topic uncovers a plethora of articles on this topic. However, almost all of these articles utilize a qualitative methodology. While this qualitative methodology has done an excellent job in informing us of the themes and ideas that pervade the concept of quality in teaching and learning, it cannot adequately inform us of the structure of this concept. There is therefore a need to take this valuable research one step forward. Using quantitative methodologies, we intend to create a model of quality in teaching and learning that informing us how the dimensions of this concept might be measured, as well as how they interrelate with each other to bring about students' "summative" appraisal of "total" quality in teaching and learning. We also believe there to be a need to decompose this model across the VET system to see how quality in teaching and learning might differ between various teaching strata (such as between teaching apprentices and teaching high level TAFE courses).

What would help us most in this process? Two things will help us in this research. Firstly, this research will be run out of Chisholm Institute. That means that, at the moment, our sample will be drawn from Chisholm students. It would be great to get other institutes involved in this study so as to cover a much more diverse student population. Secondly, it would be great to get some funding for this project to assist in some of the costs. We are in the process of applying to the NCVET for such funding.

DB: Currently I am working through understanding my new job role. In doing so, I have been asked to research and develop discussion papers related to defining the future range of learning services that my branch would consider.

However, I would be keen to pick up a research project that investigated developing a research culture within the VET sector – a project I had begun as Senior Manager Teaching and Learning Services, and have not been able to continue with it due to other priorities.

Assistance I would find really useful is working closely with an experienced researcher sharing the research project activities and its findings.

SS: I will be continuing with CURVE's internal surveys as part of CIT's compliance and I also want to put my hand up to be part of NCVET's open round of research projects. What would help me is opportunity, as I said earlier. I imagine it is what all new researchers need, the opportunity to learn, to be part of the VET research process.

TMP: Next research project we are currently scoping at the moment has a specific focus on mobile technologies and applications for trade areas.

What areas do I need help with? All areas – biggest area for me personally is analysing qualitative data.

▲ What advice would you give somebody that was working in the VET sector and wished to start researching?

JW: There are so many under-researched topics in VET. I guess my advice would be to just start researching. If you produce good quality work, there are enough people around that will recognise your contribution, and so assist you in realising your interests. Doing a Masters or a PhD in the field cannot hurt either. On a final note, the NCVET do excellent work in research and in supporting research capability. Moreover, they are very encouraging of people who want to undertake research projects. You could begin to explore possibility by going to the NCVET website and see what they have to offer.

DB: I have found my research journey to date has been a long learning journey. Aspects that have assisted me with this journey have included:

- Identify a topic that is relevant to my work role and will continue to motivate my interest.

- Gain confirmed support from both my superiors and peers.
- Seek an experienced researcher and work closely with them jointly – going alone does make the journey more difficult.

Start small and build up one's skills, knowledge, expertise and networks.

SS: Explore an area that means something to you, be passionate, don't be afraid to ask for help, find colleagues to bounce ideas off, people who you can discuss the issues with, people who will read your work and provide constructive criticism. If you're curious, have a go.

TMP: Start. You learn a lot along the way. There is never a perfect time, perfect budget, or the perfect project but start researching - you uncover some amazing things.

VET research theses 2006 (continued)

As already mentioned in the April 2007 edition of *Research Today*, much excellent research is written up in theses for PhDs, EdDs and Masters degrees and this work does not always become as widely known as it deserves. We invited AVETRA members to submit details of such theses completed in 2006, and received a number of submissions. Three were showcased in the previous edition of *Research Today* and the remainder that were submitted to use are reproduced below. You are invited to contact the authors for more information.

▲ Vocational education and training (VET) as a tool for regional planning and management: Case studies from Australian tropical savanna communities

Institution Charles Darwin University
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Abstract: Australia's tropical savannas comprise about one quarter of the nation's land mass but less than three per cent of the population. The region is characterised by relatively large Indigenous populations and low population density. Industries contribute significantly to national wealth but Indigenous peoples experience relatively poor health, education and employment outcomes. While VET is traditionally viewed as a means for individuals to gain employment skills or industry to gain the skills needed to remain competitive and productive, this research explores broader outcomes of VET and its value for diverse communities in these contexts.

The project asks three questions: What are the indicators of well-being across the savanna?; What is the link between education and learning and capacity building in savanna communities?; and How can education and learning be applied

effectively to produce capacity-building outcomes? Using a mixed methods design, the project begins with a statistical assessment of well-being in the savanna to answer the first question. This is used as a basis for site selection of four case studies of the effective application of VET. Qualitative data from the cases is analysed using NUDIST software to answer the second and third questions and to build a theoretical framework.

While the findings may support the traditional employment role VET, they also suggest that identity formation is a key ingredient that contributes to effectiveness of programs. A model for the formation of identity in training is developed.

The findings have significance for a number of VET and community development stakeholders including those who are: addressing skills shortages; developing policy around Indigenous communities; interested in using VET for enterprise development; and VET practitioners and evaluators wanting to ensure quality in learning. As such, the implications extend beyond the Australian tropical savannas and could be tested and applied in regions within and outside Australia.

▲ Mature Aged Women Returning to Study

Institution University of Western Australia
 Author: Diana Purcell
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Abstract: Mature aged women today represent an age cohort where skills developed in early adulthood are now ineffectual in the modern workplace and they are increasingly returning to study. However, mature aged women are also at high risk of withdrawing from study with the primary reason given as pressures from within the family. This research gathered data from ten mature aged women who returned to full time study in a 20-week course at a TAFE College in Western Australia. It is based on the interactionist premise that we assume, in judgement of ourselves, the perspectives of our significant reference group. Interviews at the commencement of their studies revealed that women understood the intentions of family members to be supportive or non-supportive, where support is defined as physical or emotional (or both). Second interviews at the end of the course revealed that the women understood that family members had sustained their initial intentions – those who were supportive remained supportive and those who were non-supported remained opposed to the women's decision. Nine of the women successfully completed their course. It is suggested that mature aged women who return to study in response to significant transitions within their life demonstrate tenacity regardless of the perceived level of physical and emotional support provided by the family and that cohesion of family relationships is an indicator of the level of support

mature aged women, returning to study, receive from their family.

▲ Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Managers: Balancing managerial and professional outcomes in their role as educational leaders

Institution University of Western Sydney
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Abstract: The research in this portfolio is situated in Technical and Further Education (TAFE) in New South Wales. It examines the impact that changes to improve the competitiveness of the vocational education and training sector have had on the role of managers in TAFE. These managers are suffering a number of tensions associated with balancing the pedagogic, professional and managerial aspects of their role. Qualitative research methods including in-depth interviews and inductive data analysis were used during the study to allow the perceptions of the participants to be presented. The content analyses of interview data revealed that managers were juggling educational leadership and accountability in an economic rationalist environment that appeared to favour managerialism above the traditional, professional orientation to providing quality education favoured by TAFE practitioners. While recommendations were made about how to improve the managers' role a concern remains that performance indicators in TAFE, which emphasise quantitative measures of efficiency, marginalise educational quality. Many staff now view the managers' role as unattractive raising questions about who will step up to sustain valued leadership in TAFE. A major implication of the research is that close attention must be paid, at all levels of the TAFE hierarchy, to succession planning.

2008 CONFERENCE-call for participation

AVETRA will be holding its 11th Annual Conference on 3 and 4 April 2008 in Adelaide.

The 2008 conference theme is **VET in Context**.

Together at this conference we will explore ways VET research informs policy and practice for social, workforce, and economic development in local, national and international contexts.

Participation as a presenter, sponsor, exhibitor and/or conference delegate is invited, but be quick if you wish to be a presenter. The Call for papers has just closed and the response rate has been high but **you may be able to secure one of the last places for papers if you get an abstract in by no later than 30 November for review by the selection committee.**

The 11th AVETRA Conference is expected to attract some 250 participants.

International and national Keynote Speakers, some 60 papers, workshops and symposia will be presented over the 2 days. We have extended the time devoted to each session in response to feedback from 2007 conference participants to enable full exchange of ideas.

The conference aims to be informative, challenging and practical and assist people to build interdisciplinary networks. It will address the following five contexts:

Education

This may encompass VET in schools and post-compulsory education or other education sectors, cross-sectoral or interdepartmental contexts.

Place

This may encompass VET in remote, rural, regional and metropolitan settings and roles and approaches to achieve community and regional development.

Economic

This may encompass VET for workforce and economic development, sustainability, existing workers, skill shortages, innovation and new work skills, and good practice in industry.

Social

This may encompass VET and social policy, community welfare, citizenship, and individual health and wellbeing.

Practice

This may encompass pedagogy, teaching and learning, assessment, professional development for practitioners in new learning spaces such as virtual worlds, for equity and new learner groups, different learning styles, or management within training providers and the Australian Quality Training Framework.

Conference Registrations will open shortly.

For further information and to lodge abstracts go to www.aveutra.org.au

or contact

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