My name is Pam Caven. I am the principal project officer at ANTA with responsibility for the implementation of the recommendations in the High Level Review of Training Packages. Paul Byrne, Interim CEO of ANTA, is unable to be here today and has asked me to represent him.

Training is now a hot topic in the Australian media: “Hitting the panic button on skills” (Age 10 March 2005) “Adult trainees a maturing investment” (The Australian 14 March 2005) “More work needed on skills shortage” (Australian Financial Review 14 March 2005). It is a refreshing change that the skills of those in the workforce and those wanting to get into the workforce is attracting such attention.

‘Australian VET- an Overview’ is the topic that the AVETRA organisers gave Paul Byrne. This is a large canvas on which to paint.

**By way of introduction, we know that**

- Australia like many OECD countries has an ageing workforce that will need to be replaced
- Workplaces and work practices are changing
- Technology is transforming the way we do business.
- Skills shortages already exist in some industries

What is also clear is that Australian industry needs to encourage new entrants into targeted occupations and needs to ensure that the existing workforce has the appropriate skills for responding to changing conditions in the workplace.

ANTA is currently working with the Industry Skills Councils on trying to identify what shortages and skill needs there are in the industries covered by the Council, the magnitude of the shortage, reasons why the shortages exist and strategies that could be used to overcome them.

This diagnostic and forward looking approach is important to ensure that resources are put into solutions that will work and that training products and services are designed to meet the needs of the contemporary and future workforce.
In my presentation today I want to set the context for your discussions on research priorities by focussing on DIFFERENCE AND LEGACY

How ANTA has made a difference

The legacy of ANTA

Difference - Let’s look at how ANTA has made a difference

Twelve years ago ANTA was established by an Act of Parliament to build a national VET system capable of delivering a pool of highly skilled labour for Australian industry.

In the early 1990s Australia was going through a period of significant economic reform. The effects of globalisation and rapidly changing technology were beginning to be felt. Australian government and industry were focussed on ways to improve our competitiveness.

The need to improve Australia’s skill base was identified as one of the major drivers for leveraging significant productivity improvements in industry.

At this time there were 8 separate training systems across the 8 states and territories, operating independently, with content and delivery primarily determined by training providers.

The qualifications gained in one state and delivered by one provider, were often not recognized in another state, or indeed by other providers.

Industry often complained that the training on offer was not up to modern industry standards and particularly did not take account of their needs as clients.

Industry expressed particular concern that there was a limited range of training providers and consequently a restricted choice of providers.

The establishment of ANTA in 1992 was a unique arrangement in Australian public administration - bringing together Commonwealth and State governments to work with industry in formal arrangements enshrined in legislation.

These arrangements have resulted in enormous shifts in a sector that is the intersection of so many difficult political and industrial issues:
• Commonwealth versus State, particularly the rights of states under the constitution brought into sharp focus by the fact that States fund two-thirds of government funded VET in Australia and the Commonwealth one-third

• Liberal versus Labor, both federally and between states

• The different and sometimes competing priorities of employer organisations and unions

• Public versus private

• Competency versus curriculum.

While the common purpose was nearly always there, namely to build a quality, national and industry focussed VET system, how to get there was almost always in hot dispute.

The current VET system

After a decade of significant change and solid reform we have a VET sector that can now operate across state borders and one that is more focussed on industry needs.

- We now have **nationally recognized, portable qualifications** offered by over 4000 registered training providers, public and private, all registered in accordance with a national set of standards.

- **Training Packages** – industry defined competency outcomes, assessment guidelines and national qualifications, which meet workplace skill requirements – Training Packages **cover most industries. More than 80% of the workforce**, and industries, which never before had access to national structured training such as transport and distribution and retail, are covered

- With the **Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)** we have nationally agreed standards for both RTOs and accrediting bodies

- **Qualifications** are now recognised throughout the country and we are starting to see higher VET qualifications being introduced
There is a more **competitive training market**, which offers more choice for clients. Businesses and trainees are more able to choose an RTO and work with that RTO to get the training they need. Indeed there has been a spectacular growth in the number of commercial private providers.

**Participation in the public VET system** was up 65% in 2003 from 1992 figures, with 1 in 8 working age Australians participating.

**VET in schools** has seen a huge growth with over 40% of year 11 and 12 school students now doing VET as part of their schooling.

**The VET industry is worth $8 billion per year** with industry and governments contributing about 45% each in investment

With Australia’s shortage of skilled labour, our ageing population and the changing work environment – more contract, part time and casual workers, the role of VET is more important than ever.

In short we have moved from a supply driven system to a **more demand driven system**.

The success of these initiatives is attested by the fact that so many international visitors come to try and understand, look at and learn from what has been achieved in Australia.

**Legacy of ANTA**

On 22 October 2004 – the Australian Government made a decision to abolish ANTA and absorb the functions into the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training from 1 July 2005. This decision heralded the beginning of the next phase for VET in Australia.

ANTA is now in the business of working on a smooth transition of its functions and its work to the Commonwealth department.

**What is ANTA handing over to DEST?**

1. **An industry-led system**

Industry has been involved at all levels of VET’s operations
At the strategic level – the ANTA Board has had direct input to the Ministerial Council on planning and policy arrangements for the sector. The Board has acted as a mechanism for direct interactions between industry and governments in decision making for the sector and the shaping of 8 separate systems into one national system.

Industry has also played a prominent role in the machinery of the VET sector particularly through the National Training Quality Council. The Council advises the ANTA Board and Ministers on policy and implementation of quality standards and products for the system.

At the operational end of the sector, industry has been heavily involved with defining the competency standards and developing the products to meet industry’s needs. It is estimated that around 30 000 people across Australia, the vast majority of them from industry, have worked on developing and reviewing the Training Packages through which industry defines the skills and qualifications needed in the workplace.

ANTA’s role was to bring the industry voice to all the tables and it contributed to a number of significant achievements – including

- Industry based qualifications
- RTO standards/audits
- Laws for national operation
- User choice
- Standard training contracts
- Development of Industry Skill Reports to provide better market intelligence about industry skill needs.

The ten Industry Skills Councils we have in place are an important mechanism by which to engage industry in the VET system. They play an important role in developing and maintaining Training Packages and in doing so gathering market intelligence about the future skills needs of their industry.

The ANTA Board has developed some principles for the continuation of an industry-led national training system:

- From the perspective of the client there will be seamless operation and portability across state and territory borders
- Industry is in the best position to articulate their skill needs and say what competencies they want in the workplace
- Clients will have confidence in the quality of training provided to them, regardless of the location of the provider
- The training system will be inclusive of the needs of all client groups
  - Employers, employees and students will have adequate information and the ability to exercise choice in making their decisions.

In their contributions to discussions about the future national arrangements, the ANTA Board has kept these principles at the forefront.

2. **A national quality framework**

- The AQTF defines nationally agreed standards for both Registered Training Organisations and accrediting bodies, and ensures both registrations and qualifications have national effect.

3. **A research culture**

ANTA has initiated and supported an impressive program of research and investigation across a wide range of areas of VET concern. ANTA has collaborated on research projects with other government departments, such as DEWR, the states and territories, industry bodies and associations, Industry Skills Councils and researchers in universities and in VET providers.

ANTA has published and disseminated its products widely through print and the web.

Since 1997, ANTA has funded the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) to manage a national research and evaluation program. As part of this program, the NCVER manages a competitive research grants program, implements a significant dissemination program and maintains and grows the VOCED data base.

I know that many of you in the audience have won tenders to conduct ANTA research projects.

Much of the research has been characterised by its leading edge quality and its emphasis on practical outcomes that could inform and influence action.

I will indicate some of the more recent areas of such research, without attempting to describe the full body of this work.
(i) Skills shortages

In undertaking this research, ANTA has identified twelve factors, which impact on future industry skill needs and skill shortages and have grouped these into three broad categories:

- Those where a **training response can make a significant difference** for industry. For example if shortages exist because of health and safety issues, higher demand for customer service skills, regulatory compliance, demographic chance or change in technology, then training is likely to have a significant impact.

- Those where **training is important, but not the only (or even the most important) response** – particularly where shortages are created through productivity change, market expansion or globalisation.

- Those where **training is not likely to make a difference** – for example training probably won’t overcome shortages if they are due to employment arrangements and wages and the attractiveness of an industry for new entrants and retaining existing workers.

(ii) Industry:

There has been a vast body of work undertaken by the national Industry bodies to identify the skills needs of different occupations and industries in their development of Training Packages.

More recently ANTA has sponsored the development of industry skill reports.

This research is a partnership between ANTA and the Industry Skills Councils and builds on the premise that industry is in the best position to articulate their skill needs, and be supported by government in expressing those needs and finding solutions.

ANTA has just published its first completed report – for the Transport and Logistics Industry Skills Council. I’ll just highlight two factors that were covered in the report to show the potential these reports have in planning for the products, services and policy responses for the sector:

66% of the transport and logistics industry is aged over 35 (16% are over 55) meaning that there will be a loss of significant skills and corporate
memory as large numbers of employees retire and loss of capacity if retirees are not replaced. The industry has identified three strategies it will implement to address this issue

- **implementing more flexible working arrangements** for mature workers to encourage them to remain in the industry longer (note that this is not a training response)

- **encouraging medical assessment and training the workforce** to become aware of health and lifestyle issues to reduce the range of health issues related with an ageing workforce, and

- **upskilling remaining workers** to cover the loss of skills.

Customers want a one-stop shop for all their transport and logistics needs – provided just-in-time, by exceptional service staff at competitive prices and they want to know where their goods are at any time of the day or night. This is driving the demand for different forms of skills and knowledge, particularly in management skills and use of new technologies. The industry has signalled it will incorporate these skills into the Training Package and work with providers in delivering these skills.

At the other end of the spectrum, the report points to the increased casualisation of the workforce and contracting out of business within the industry. Rather than look at training options, the industry has identified the need for a communication strategy targeted at small to medium enterprises to assist owner-drivers and contractors to take up training and the new technologies.

These reports are rich sources of information about what is happening with skills in industry, with insights by industry itself about how shortages may be reduced.

As well as the Transport report, ANTA, in collaboration with the relevant ISCs, is also finalising the Electrocomms industries report and is about to consult on the Community Services and Health report. Reports are in the pipeline for Services, Innovation and Business Services, and Resources and Infrastructure.

The reports that are out there are getting good support and you can obtain copies from ANTA’s website.
Other ANTA research has recognised that the lines between industries and occupations are blurring and here I would point to very erudite and insightful work from Western Australia, in conjunction with the ISC, on Shared Technology and to the research supporting the Competitive Manufacturing Initiative (CMI).

(iii) The High Level Review of Training Packages

The High Level Review of Training Packages involved a significant amount of research.

Phase One researched issues affecting Training Packages now and into the future
Phase Two documented the experience of Training Package implementation from the perspective of a range of users.

Phase Three involved national consultation with more than 1000 stakeholders and analysis of more than 130 submissions.

Additionally a series of think pieces were commissioned to inform the review.

Kay Schofield will be discussing the High Level Review in more detail in the next session.

Implementing the outcomes of the High Level Review of Training Packages has been a major commitment of the NTQC and the ANTA Board.

The NTQC signed off on a comprehensive three year Work Plan to implement the outcomes of the High Level Review of Training Package in June 2004. This work was seen to be of the highest priority.

Following the abolition of ANTA in October the NTQC agreed to a revised Work Plan that reflected:

- What outcomes would our industry clients want to see;
- What visible changes can be achieved in the next eight months;
- What actions can ANTA take that will have sufficient momentum to ensure continuity post June 2005.

The revised Work Plan identified 14 outcomes against which ANTA would deliver by June 2005.
They included

- A range of improvements to Training Packages, including the way they are developed and reviewed;
- Advice on skills clusters
- Employability skills
- AQF descriptors
- Teaching and learning
- Pathways and
- Licensing

ANTA is progressing work against all these outcomes by commissioning further research on, for example:

- Employability skills and their integration into Training Packages
- Pathways across industry areas
- Skills clusters
- AQF VET descriptors
- Harmonising VET qualifications with licensing requirements

The NTQC has requested that at the May meeting ANTA not only reports on progress, but also indicates how the work should be taken forward by DEST.

*Skilling Australia, New Directions for Vocational Education and Training* spells out DEST’s resolve to follow through on this work.

“The High Level Review of Training Packages conducted in 2004 identified a number of initiatives to strengthen Training Packages. The implementation of these initiatives will be of the highest priority under the new training arrangements”.

**(iv) Assessment**

Assessment has been recognised as a key process in the competency based system. Sound assessment processes underpin the quality of the outcomes of the VET system. While there have been numerous studies of assessment in all its facets one that remains of course dear to my heart is the publication of the 10 guides in the Training Package Assessment Materials project. A team of researchers worked on this project. The guides enjoyed widespread acceptance. DEST recognised their
significance and funded a national professional development program, a significant way of promoting a strategic conversation around assessment.

There has been a range of research projects on Recognition of Prior Learning and Recognition of Current Competency. The most recent ANTA project investigated the application of RPL in seven enterprises and provides strategies for boosting the application of RPL. The report from that research will be available in the near future.

(v) Flexible Learning

Australia is credited with being one of the countries at the forefront of adopting new technologies. Under the Australian Flexible Learning Framework there has been an enormous body of research conducted on the processes, tools and interoperability of the various national web platforms.

Much of this research charts new territory for example the research that lies behind the production of toolboxes, NSW’s work on Working and Learning in Vocational Education and Training in the Knowledge Era to name a couple of projects.

(vi) Equity

ANTA commissioned several pieces of research to assist with and inform the implementation of specific strategies in the Blueprints (Partners in Learning Culture and Bridging Pathways) including:

- A review of the Equity Advisory Service
- A significant round of Disability and Indigenous Blueprint work based learning projects, managed by Reframing the Future
- Research and evaluation into professional development to support better outcomes for people with a disability
- Group Training Australia’s research on best practice in recruitment, placement and support of Indigenous Australians and people with a disability in New Apprenticeships

(vii) Teaching and Learning

Blue Skies, an aspirational study of good teaching and learning gained a great deal of support from VET teachers and trainers. They appreciated that ANTA had commissioned a project that sought their views on student’s preferred styles of learning.
“Doing it well, doing it better” was the final report of the ANTA Teaching and Learning Strategies Scoping project. The study identified key issues and themes that VET practitioners found challenging in the translation of Training Packages into teaching and learning strategies.

As a result ANTA has produced a guide on working with Indigenous Learners and is finalising the production of two practical guides on contextualising learning and shared technology.

(viii) Human resource development

The VET workforce carries a substantial responsibility for the training and skills development of many workers in Australian businesses and therefore has to be a leader in building the capability of its own people. The national VET system is critical to building the skills of Australians to engage in the global economy.

A consortium led by the Quay Connection conducted research which included a literature review and interviews with State and Territory Training Authorities, the major VET workforce employers, and key national and international experts and stakeholders, produced a profile of the VET workforce, investigated national and international thinking on demands on this workforce and developed a case for a national approach to VET workforce planning and development.

Next steps

Further research needs to be pursued in areas such as:

- Determining future work skills needs
- Placing VET in a globally competitive market
- Client learning styles and teaching practices
- Consistency of outcomes
- Partnerships and involvement in decision making for Indigenous people

Focus for a strong national system

Earlier I identified some aspects of ANTA’s legacy to DEST. This is what we think needs to be the focus for a strong national system:

- **Boosting industry leadership** in both product development and in levels of investment in skills formation.
Building the **quality and capability of providers** who deliver training. Delivery is where the rubber hits the road, where the client meets the system. The national system is only as good as the implementation that occurs at state and territory level.

**Stronger implementation of the national quality standards**, including simpler, more consistent and outcomes based auditing of providers. Strong audit is one tool in a quality system and ideally will sit as part of the right mix of regulation and competition, which offers clients a range of quality choices.

**National consistency**: The tensions between 8 state and territory systems and the need for national consistency and reduction of red tape are constant and are still a source of frustration for big business and training providers which work across borders.

**The legislation** that underpins the whole national system to give national recognition to qualification outcomes and national operation of training providers is still incomplete, but is well underway.

**The training products – the High Level Review of Training Packages** which took place in 2003 and 2004 set a big agenda for the next 3 years to ensure that Training Packages are more flexible and responsive and meet the needs of rapidly changing workplaces. We need to continue momentum to drive the changes towards the next generation of Training Packages.

Bedding down our **Industry Skills Councils** as a key mechanism for industry advice on products and skill needs.

**Making sure the training system is accessible** and meets the needs of all clients, including those individuals who have particular needs such as Indigenous Australians, people with a disability and people of culturally diverse backgrounds.

**DEST** has affirmed many of this focus in its directions paper “Skilling Australia – New Directions for VET”:

DEST has undertaken a series of consultations with business, industry, providers and government departments during February and March 2005 on the future arrangements for Australia’s national training system set out in the Directions paper.
MINCO will be discussing the new VET arrangements at its meeting today.

What is evident in DEST’s proposed new arrangements is their commitment to maintain and strengthen the research culture in vocational education and training.

There is clear affirmation in Skilling Australia,

“National research and analysis is critical to informing policy development, setting future directions and evaluating training. Research and analysis play a key role in every facet of training”

The key role of NCVER is also affirmed.

Conclusion

Paul Byrne in a recent interview with John Mitchell in Campus Review. Provided a concise statement of what he thinks should be in place in the new VET arrangements:

- “conscious guidance by industry of national skill development
- specialist advice from Industry Skills Councils about new skills
- constructive partnering between industry and providers
- continual improvements to Training Packages
- promotion to school students of initial pathways other than university.”

The establishment of ANTA made a significant difference to the history of vocational education and training in Australia. ANTA provided a focus for the states and territories and Commonwealth government to establish the central importance of industry leadership at all levels in the national system.

- Industry is involved at a strategic level through its direct input to the Ministerial Council;

- Industry is involved at a process level through its participation on the National Training Quality Council with its responsibility for the national framework for the national VET system. That framework
includes the Australian Quality Training Framework and Training Packages;

- And Industry is involved at an operational level through its development of industry competency standards. Training Packages as statements of the competencies that people need in the workplace, how they will be assessed and qualifications are now accepted as the currency of the national VET system. And that transformation has happened in a relatively short time.

ANTA has left a legacy for DEST, which includes a robust research culture. The ANTA Board has set research priorities. ANTA has partnered with other government departments, states and territories, industry and industry associations, Industry Skills Councils, public and private RTOs and universities. Through their research projects ANTA has shaped some of the debates in the VET community, changed policy and led to the adoption of some important initiatives.

You are among the contributors to this research culture and legacy.

Thank you