



From the President

Greetings to all AVETRA members!

The post-conference period of the year brings changes to the AVETRA Executive. This means welcoming new members and saying farewell to other colleagues who are stepping down at the end

of their terms. I'd like to thank the 'retiring' members of the Executive – Berwyn Clayton, Erica Smith and Phil Loveder. Each has made an outstanding contribution to AVETRA in a number of different ways and while I know they will no longer be serving on the Executive, each will continue their very significant work in growing VET research in Australia.

Llandis Barratt-Pugh has also stepped into the role of Immediate Past President – and Convenor for our 2013 Conference in Perth - after serving as President for the past two years. I would like to pay tribute to the enthusiasm and commitment that Llandis brought to the role of President.

I'd like to welcome onto the Executive Sinan Gemici and Linda Simon. Sinan will be working with Sarojni Choy and Ros Brennan-Kemmis on A-News and Research Today, while Linda will take up the reins of the Awards and Scholarships Portfolio from Alicia Boyle who is now Secretary for AVETRA. We are delighted to continue to have the services of Kevin Heys as Treasurer and Ruth Wallace as Vice President. Annette Foley will continue her wonderful work looking after the membership portfolio and Steven Hodge will continue to manage OctoberVET. I am excited to be working with such a dynamic and enthusiastic team.

Most immediately, the Executive will be turning its attention to exploring ways in which we might further develop the scale and scope of AVETRA. We are planning a one day face-to-face planning meeting on the 21st June in Melbourne to undertake this process. This will be followed by an opportunity for wider consultation and input from all AVETRA members and I hope you will take the chance to engage in this process and help to build a set of priorities for activities to support the growth of VET Research. I'd encourage you to keep a track of these developments through the AVETRA web page (<http://avetra.org.au/>).

Plans for OctoberVET will start to be rolled out over the next few months. This is an important annual event for AVETRA as it is a way for local groups of members to connect, discuss issues and undertake activities related to VET research that are most relevant to their needs. I would strongly encourage you to visit the AVETRA web site to learn more about hosting an OctoberVET event in your locale.



Michele Simons

President of AVETRA, University of South Australia, June 2012

Another very successful annual AVETRA conference

The 15th Annual AVETRA Conference was held in Canberra on April 12 and 13. The theme for this year's Conference was: "The Value and Voice of VET Research for individuals, industry, community and the nation". There were over 80 refereed research papers presented which addressed the four dimensions of this theme.

We were also fortunate to have a range of keynote speakers who presented various perspectives on the theme. Robin Shreeve, Tom Karmel, Ann Marie Bathmaker and Salim Akojee and a panel of expert researchers provided the participants with both a national and an international context for analysing and thinking about the Value and Voice of VET Research.

Over 120 people attended the conference and delegates also had the opportunity to join the pre-conference workshops which focused on the topics of adult literacy, applying for research grants, VET in an international context and mentoring for early career researchers. Many thanks to the Conference organising committee in Canberra for its enthusiasm and hard work that made the conference a success.

Recent Publications

A national charter for TAFE in Australia

The case for a National Charter for TAFE: its role in public sector provision in Australia / TAFE Directors Australia (TDA). Canberra, Australian Capital Territory: TDA, 2012. 20p.

This paper makes the case that a National Charter for TAFE would bring consistency and greater certainty ahead of new Commonwealth State and Territory funding for VET, available from 1 July 2012. The TDA Board believes that it is time to: affirm the significance of TAFE in delivering on the Government's productivity and participation agenda; articulate the role, scope and responsibilities of TAFE; and commit to administrative and funding arrangements that will enable TAFE providers to perform this role effectively. The paper follows recommendations from Skills Australia that the role of TAFE be better articulated, to assist with consistency, funding and planning.

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The following awards were made to recognise excellence in research, services to AVETRA and early career researchers (see photos on the right):

- Erica Smith received the Berwyn Clayton Award for Distinguished Service to AVETRA
- Stephen Billett received the Ray Barker Award for Distinguished Service to VET Research
- Erica Smith and Andy Smith received the AVETRA Journal Article of the Year Award
- Raymond Smith received the AVETRA Paper of the Year
- Jennifer Davids and Jennifer Aitken received the NCVET Early Career Researcher Award and NCVET Early Career Highly Commended, respectively
- Sonal Nakar and Rodney Mason received the Ray Barker Ambassador Awards

In 2013 the Conference is to be held in Western Australia and we hope that you can participate and enjoy the chance to meet and talk with colleagues in the VET research community.

OctoberVET 2012: Call for Convenors!

OctoberVET is the name of a season of local events to share information and ideas about VET. OctoberVET complements AVETRA's annual conference, and as the name suggests, it runs through October (with a few events usually spilling into November). Events range in size and scope, depending on local needs and interests, and range from convivial, small-scale gatherings to larger formal events with speakers. Events can be brief (a couple of hours) or can span a whole day.

The success of OctoberVET always depends on the good-will and inventiveness of a local Convenor (or group of Convenors) who are connected with local VET networks and identities to find a focus and a space for their event.

AVETRA offers a small seed-grant for all OctoberVET events (which can be used for catering for example), and a national coordinator is on hand to discuss your ideas, and to provide advice and support. AVETRA also advertises OctoberVET events nationally to help draw attention to local events.

Last year's themes will give you an idea of variety of interests gathered together under the OctoberVET banner:

- Views On VET: New Realities, New Perspectives (Convened by Tracey Singh)
- How to use NCVET to inform policy and practice (Convened by Rod Mason)
- Skills for Prosperity: The challenges ahead (Convened by Wendy De Luca)
- Work – A common ground (Convened by Anita Wesney)
- Skills for whose prosperity? Critical agendas for research in workplace learning (Convened by Keiko Yasukawa)
- Current VET Research in WA: A Review by VET Researchers (Convened by Priscilla Shorne & Llandis Barratt-Pugh)
- VET Research Methodologies and International Students and VET (Convened by Alicia Boyle)
- VET and Social Inclusion (Convened by Erica Smith)
- The VET Profession: Beyond 2011 (Convened by Lauri Grace)

With another momentous year unfolding for VET it's time to start thinking about how to bring your local VET community together to share ideas and inspiration. Get in touch with Steven Hodge (national OctoberVET coordinator) to discuss your ideas and find out how to get the OctoberVET ball rolling. Call him on 03 5327 9532 (office), 0421 224474 or email him at s.hodge@ballarat.edu.au



Erica Smith: Berwyn Clayton Award for Distinguished Service to AVETRA



Stephen Billett: Ray Barker Award for Distinguished Service to VET Research



Andy Smith: AVETRA Journal Article of the Year Award



Jennifer Davids and Jennifer Aitken: NCVET Early Career Researcher Award and NCVET Early Career Highly Commended, respectively.



Sonal Nakar: Ray Barker Ambassador Award

A MINUTE WITH: Jennifer Davids

I first got interested in VET research in 2006 when I was asked by Southbank Institute of Technology to develop a Vocational Graduate Certificate for teacher education. I read widely the existing research produced by the Australian and overseas education research sector regarding the changing role of the teacher and VET practitioner. Given the remarkable level of change that has occurred in VET and its ageing teacher population, there have been several questions that have fascinated me since then, relating to the retention of experienced teachers, their expertise and their role in preventing the loss of knowledge threatening the VET sector. By 2008, I had enrolled in a PhD with Roger Harris as my principal supervisor at the University of South Australia.

Two people who inspired me most to conduct research are Roger Harris and Berwyn Clayton. I liked the respective work Roger and Berwyn had undertaken which I found both accessible and pertinent to my area of research. Since 2008, Roger has been a steady, supportive and guiding influence as my supervisor. In 2009, I won a NCVET Building Research Capacity scholarship, which set particular goals and helped develop my research skills while being mentored by Roger and Berwyn. I found this invaluable, because their down to earth approach to research, writing and presentation has been supportive, practical and achievable.

The areas of VET research that interest me most sit around and among the complexities that naturally arise from the changing role of education in society and its increased marketisation, which impact on the professional identity and purpose of teachers. I particularly admire the work of Stephen Ball and Andy Hargreaves, who are unafraid to explore and clearly identify the impact that the political agenda has had on education and the teaching profession.

The most interesting piece of VET research I have conducted so far was the focus groups I gathered to kick off my PhD research. I asked for volunteers among the Lead Vocational Teachers of TAFE QLD to discuss their role and response to the changes taking place in TAFE. I felt that I experienced the impact of a dam opening! The rush of emotion was incredibly strong among the teachers who had so much to say and no one they felt they could say it to. I began to understand the level of passion that many teachers feel about their work. I realised that the topic I had decided to explore was valid. It also made me reflect on the ethical responsibility we carry as researchers when we begin to delve into people's lives.

Each edition of AVETRA News will feature a special interview with a VET researcher. If you are interested in being featured or you know someone who might – please get in touch with either Sarojni Choy or Sinan Gemici.

NCVER Scholarships

NCVER has awarded eight scholarships to researchers across the country to support and develop Australian VET research. A PhD top-up scholarship, valued at \$15,000 over three years, was awarded to Australian National University (ANU) PhD student, Helen Law, toward her work on youth involvement in science in Australia and Taiwan. In addition, seven scholarships have been awarded to VET practitioners to participate in the 2012 NCVER Research Community of Practice program. The seven Community of Practice scholarship winners are Tracey Tredinnick (Western Sydney Institute); Stephen Ward (Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE); Carmen Goodridge (Central Institute of Technology); Kerrie Bowtell (North Coast Institute); Tracey Collins (TAFE Illawarra); Ivano Buoro (Sydney Institute, Ultimo College); Sue Bass (Polytechnic West).

2012 Community of practice underway

The latest NCVER Building Researcher Capacity Community of Practice came together at Victoria University on 10th and 11th May.

Investigating a range of issues important to their workplaces, the seven scholarship awardees are:

- Tracey Tredinnick, OTEN, Western Sydney Institute
- Stephen Ward, Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE
- Carmen Goodridge, Central Institute of Technology
- Kerrie Bowtell, North Coast Institute
- Tracey Collins, TAFE Illawarra
- Ivano Buoro, Sydney Institute, Ultimo College
- Sue Bass, Polytechnic West

The two-day workshop provided participants with the opportunity to hear from experienced researchers, to fine tune their research proposals and to gain insights from NCVER about how to source any data and literature they need to undertake their research. They are also encouraged to use the early VET researcher resource repository on the AVETRA website.

Now back in their home territory, the practitioner-researchers have connected with their AVETRA mentors – Ruth Wallace, Jane Figgis, Llandis Barrett-Pugh, Lesley Farrell, John Mitchell, Victor Callan and Keiko Yasukawa. Participants are continuing to network via a new Wiki and mentors have been invited to utilise this resource as well. The Community will come together again at NCVER's No Frills conference in July.

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Conferences and Events



No Frills Conference, 11-13 July 2012, Adelaide: Co-hosted in 2012 with TAFE SA, the 21st staging of NCVER's popular annual conference will be an opportunity to celebrate, collaborate and connect; and as it's their big anniversary, they plan to add some 'frills'. Eminent international and national keynote speakers include Dr David Finegold, Senior Vice President for Lifelong Learning and Strategic Growth Initiatives at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey. The conference program will be staged at TAFE SA's Adelaide City Campus and Adelaide College of the Arts on Light Square in the heart of the Adelaide CBD. Special conference events will be held at other locations around Adelaide.
Further details at: www.nofrills.ncver.edu.au

2012 RC33 Eighth International Conference on Social Science Methodology, 9-13 July 2012, Sydney: The RC33 Eighth International Social Science Methodology will be held in Sydney, Australia. The dates for the conference are 9 - 13 July, 2012. Details at <http://www.acspri.org.au/conference2012>

Intelligence Squared Australia Live Debate, 11 July 2012, Adelaide Town Hall: The NCVER is partnering with St James Ethics Centre to bring the popular IQ² live debate to Adelaide for the first time. This landmark event will see nationally and internationally acclaimed speakers debate the proposition: Having a university degree is grossly overrated at the iconic Adelaide Town Hall. IQ² debates are exciting, witty and thought-provoking in the traditional Oxford-style. It's a lively night of excitement and interchange between the speakers and audience members. Speaking FOR the proposition will be:

- Professor Peter Shergold, Chancellor, University of Western Sydney
- Annabel Crabb, ABC journalist and political commentator
- Dr Lynn Arnold AO, Chief Executive Officer, Anglicare SA

National Skills Week, Various locations, 27 August – 2 September 2012: National Skills Week is a new initiative, a collaborative approach dedicated to raising the status of practical and vocational learning, enabling all Australians to gain a greater understanding of the opportunities, their potential and how they contribute to a successful, modern economy. Learning by doing is as important as academic learning- there are many paths to success.

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) Annual Conference, Perth, 6-7 September, 2012: The annual TDA conference will be held at the Perth Convention Centre this year and is the annual showcase for Australian TAFE institutes, providers of VET and higher education courses to thousands of Australian and overseas students. Further details will become available at: www.tda.edu.au

AUSTAFE 2012 National Conference, 3-5 October 2012, Alice Springs: For further details contact Lyle Mellors at lyle.mellors@cdu.edu.au

Adapt International Conference on Productivity, Investment in Human Capital and the Challenge of Youth Employment, 16 – 19 October 2012, Bergamo, Italy: The conference aims to contribute to the current debate around tackling the youth unemployment problem through a more comprehensive approach and an interdisciplinary and comparative framework. Those intending to participate should submit an abstract (max. 1500 words) by 1 June to info@adapt.it. Adapt Scientific Committee will select up to 10 papers. For information about the submission of papers and reimbursement costs please contact info@adapt.it. The list of accepted abstracts will be published online on or after 1 July 2012 on www.adaptbulletin.eu.

Australian Training Awards, Melbourne, 16 November 2012: The Australian Training Awards are the peak, national awards for the VET sector. These prestigious awards recognise and reward organisations, training providers and individuals for their outstanding commitment and contribution to building a skilled, productive and prosperous Australia.
Further details at: <http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Awards/ATA/Pages/default.aspx>

Research Learning and Work Centre (RWLC) 8th International Conference on Researching Work and Learning, 19-22 June 2013, University of Stirling, U.K.: This international conference is concerned with such questions as:

- What knowledge, which actors, and what parts of the environment are most visible?
- What and who remains invisible?
- When do actors become aware of invisible infrastructures?
- And what research methods and analytical approaches can make the invisible visible?

The deadline for submission of abstracts is 1 October 2012, and applicants will be notified of acceptance by 30 November 2012. Full details of how to submit proposals, along with further information are available at: www.stir.ac.uk/schools/education/researching-work-and-learning
If you have any queries, please contact RWL at: rwl2013@stir.ac.uk

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About AVETRA

AVETRA is the peak professional association for VET researchers. Its ability to be a sustainable and viable association depends on its membership. Members are urged to continue their membership and to encourage their colleagues to join AVETRA.

AVETRA services include:

- An annual VET international research conference
- Two editions of *International Journal of Training Research per annum*
- The quarterly AVETRA e-newsletter with the latest news in the VET sector as well as VET research.
- The new *Research Today* publication twice a year.
- OctoberVET workshops organised by AVETRA members in centres as widely spread as Perth, Darwin, Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.
- The AVETRA website with VET research links and information
- Awards for VET researchers including the joint award with TAFE Directors Australia, the Berwyn Clayton Award, The Ray Barker Award, and the AVETRA Best paper Award.

HELP AVETRA help VET research and join now if you are not a member. Full **\$160** (GST inclusive) and Student memberships **\$80.00** including GST are available.

If you are interested in contributing to this newsletter please contact either Sarojni Choy or Sinan Gemici.



Welcome to Sinan Gemici who has joined Sarojni Choy and the AVETRA News team as co-editor. Sinan is a Senior Research Officer at NCVER and works on the analysis of large-scale surveys, such as the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth and the Apprentice and Trainee Destinations Survey. He was formerly a research fellow at the University of Georgia and a teaching associate at the University of Idaho. His research focus is on school-based and tertiary VET programs that facilitate successful youth transitions.

This edition has been formatted by Tracey Singh (Sunshine Coast TAFE) and Kathy Piccardi (Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE)