Training Accreditation Council
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Annual Report

2007-2008

To the Hon Peter C Collier MLC

MINISTER FOR ENERGY; TRAINING

In accordance with Section 30 of the *Vocational Education and Training Act 1996*, I submit for your information and presentation to Parliament, the Annual Report of the Training Accreditation Council for the period commencing 1 July 2007 and ending 30 June 2008.

Ian Hill
CHAIRMAN
Training Accreditation Council

24 September 2008

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CHAIR'S REPORT

I am pleased to present to you the Training Accreditation Council's 2007-08 Annual Report.

During the 2007-08 reporting period, the Council continued to operate within a framework of continuous improvement to provide a range of services to manage the quality assurance of vocational education and training (VET) in Western Australia.

In executing its functions under the *Vocational Education and Training Act 1996* in 2007-08, the Council has undertaken 358 audits of registered training organisations, endorsed 165 initial and renewal of registration applications, accredited or re-accredited 67 courses, and issued 164 trade certificates.

Of major significance during this reporting period has been the implementation of the new national quality assurance arrangements, the *Australian Quality Training Framework 2007 (AQTF 2007)*, which was introduced 1 July 2007. The Council has worked collaboratively with the Australian government and State, and Territory governments to implement these new arrangements and ensure national consistency in application and monitoring of the Standards and outcomes based auditing.

The Training Accreditation Council through the Department of Education Services has continued to play a lead role in the development of AQTF 2007 support materials, including the review and implementation of national accreditation standards and guidelines. In October 2007, the AQTF *2007 Standards for Accredited Courses* and the AQTF *2007 Standards for State and Territory Course Accrediting Bodies* were endorsed, ensuring a nationally consistent approach to accreditation.

During 2007-08, the Council completed a review of risks associated with the closure of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and as a result developed a number of strategies for managing identified risks. Strategies included development and implementation of policies for at risk RTOs, RTOs in receipt of public funding and guidelines for the protection of fees paid in advance. These policies present a range of measures designed to minimise risks to VET clients and protect publicly funded training outcomes.

The Council has continued to focus on delivering products and services to improve the quality of vocational education and training in Western Australia. This has included delivering information sessions and workshops on various aspects of the AQTF, and development of a comprehensive range of resources to assist RTOs in conducting their business. In addition, the Council has undertaken a comprehensive review of its communication with its clients and stakeholders. The outcome of the review has resulted in the Council implementing a range of measures to ensure communication is clear, relevant and effective.

Throughout the period, the Council, in line with national guidelines, has engaged with key industry regulatory bodies to build the confidence of industry regulators to ensure that the training and assessment practices of RTOs adequately address their regulatory requirements.

The Council would also like to acknowledge the excellent services provided by officers from the Training Accreditation Council Secretariat of the Department of Education Services in supporting the work of the Council, and the commitment of Western Australian training organisations in providing quality vocational education and training through the implementation of the AQTF 2007. The Council looks forward to building on the excellent work that has been undertaken in assuring that the quality of vocational education and training in Western Australia continues to be provided at the highest standard.

Ian C Hill
Chairman
Training Accreditation Council

2007-08 Highlights

Major achievements for 2007-08

- Endorsed 165 initial and renewal of registration applications and 214 extension to scope applications.
- Approved a total of 67 courses for accreditation and re-accreditation.
- 358 audits were undertaken during 2007-08, including 137 initial and renewal registration audits; 41 accreditation reviews; 103 monitoring audits and 77 extension to scope audits.
- Issued 164 trade certificates via the established trade skills recognition process.
- The Council continued its strong focus on engaging and involving stakeholders and peak bodies in quality assurance, the requirements of the AQTF 2007 and recognition arrangements.
- Conducted 86 workshops and information sessions related to the AQTF 2007, with over 140 participants from across Western Australia attending.
- Reviewed risks associated with the closure of RTOs and developed strategies for managing identified risks including: *Risk Management Policy for At Risk RTOs* and *A Joint Risk Management Policy for RTOs in Receipt of Public Funding*; *Guidelines for the Protection of Fees Paid in Advance*; and Options for the establishment of a Qualifications Register.
- The Council engaged with key industry regulatory bodies to build industry confidence to ensure training and assessment practices of RTOs adequately address regulatory requirements.
- Sponsored the 2007 'Trainer of the Year Award' category of the Western Australian Training Awards, with support from the Department of Education Services.

Major initiatives for 2008-09

- Evaluate the implementation of the AQTF 2007 across the VET sector in Western Australia.
- Continue to develop and implement strategies for streamlining regulation through improved linkages between licensing bodies, other regulatory bodies and VET regulators.
- Maintain a leadership role in the national training framework, and the implementation and ongoing development of quality assurance arrangements within the VET sector.
- Ongoing implementation of the Council's Strategic Business Plan and Audit Strategy.
- Continue to engage and consult with stakeholders within the VET sector.

About this report

This report fulfils the requirements of Section 30(1) of the *Vocational Education and Training Act 1996* by reporting the operations of the Training Accreditation Council to the Minister for Education and Training for the period 1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008.

As the Council's Strategic Business Plan is prepared on a calendar year basis and this report is prepared on a financial year basis, activities from both the 2007 and 2008 reporting periods have been included in the report.

The report is structured to include three (3) main sections (see below) and incorporates nine (9) Key Goal Areas that the Council has developed that will be the focus of their work over the medium term. The Key Goal Areas complement the three high level outcomes identified below:

- Management of Council functions and legislative responsibilities
- Effective Working Relationships with Key Stakeholders and Clients
- Effective AQTF Support Services to Registered Training Organisations

Where possible, data for the 2007-08 reporting period and both the 2005-06 and 2006-07 reporting periods have been provided to allow a comparative assessment of the activities and achievements of the Council to be made.

INTRODUCTION

VISION STATEMENT

The Training Accreditation Council is committed to:

- Assuring the quality and consistency of training delivery in the provision of vocational education and training.

- Being the national leader in the strategic management of the recognition of quality assurance of training, including associated policies, processes, services and standards in the vocational education and training sector.

- Providing practical, efficient and responsive support to Government, the State Training Board, industry, registered training organisations and the community.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Training Accreditation Council:

- Will be open, accountable and transparent;

- Is clear on its role as a regulatory body;

- Will embed an outcomes focus;

- Is fair and equitable; and

- Will maintain a culture of continuous improvement.

FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNCIL

The Council's functions are detailed in Part 4, Section 27 of the *Vocational Education and Training Act 1996*. They focus on quality assurance and recognition in respect to vocational education and training in Western Australia.

Under the Act, the functions of the Council are to:

- register and de-register training providers;

- accredit and vary and cancel the accreditation of courses and skills training programs and the qualifications gained from such courses and skills training programs;

- recognise skills and qualifications obtained by individuals in this State or elsewhere, in industry, the workplace or educational institutions; and

- determine the minimum competency to be provided by accredited courses and skills training programs.

The Council is also required to provide advice to the State Training Board on matters relating to the functions specified above.

The Council has an established complaint procedure to support its functions. Provision for appeals against Council decisions is available through the State Training Board under Section 31 of the Act.

Membership

The Training Accreditation Council has seven members who are appointed by the Minister for Education and Training in accordance with the *Vocational Education and Training Act 1996*. They are selected on the basis of their expertise, qualifications and experience in accreditation, curriculum, training organisation registration or skills recognition.

Mr Mark Simpson
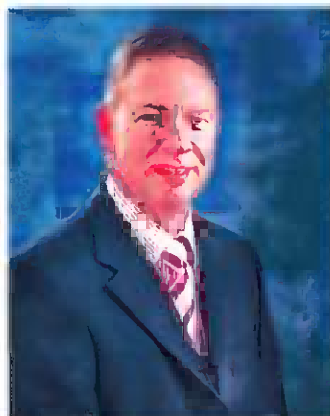Mark Simpson & Associates

Ms Lorraine Carter
Big W (WA) Pty Ltd

Dr Irene Ioannakis
WesTrac Pty Ltd

Mr David Wood
Curriculum Council

Mr Iain McDougall
Hospitality Group Training

Ms Liz Harris
Challenger TAFE

Mr Ian Hill
Chair

THE CONTEXT IN WHICH THE COUNCIL WORKS

The Training Accreditation Council is an independent statutory body that provides for quality assurance and recognition processes for vocational education and training in Western Australia. The Council operates within the National Skills Framework and is the Western Australian Registering and Course Accrediting Body under the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF).

The AQTF is a set of nationally agreed quality assurance arrangements for training and assessment services delivered by training organisations. It also comprises of standards for the accreditation of courses. The AQTF was initially implemented in 2002, revised in 2005 and again in 2007 including the identification of excellence criteria. The AQTF 2007 comprises:

(a) *AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for Registration*
(b) *AQTF 2007 Standards for State and Territory Registering Bodies*
(c) *AQTF 2007 Excellence Criteria*
(d) *AQTF 2007 Standards for Accredited Courses*
(e) *AQTF 2007 Standards for State and Territory Course Accrediting Bodies*

The Council is responsible for ensuring compliance with the relevant standards and for complying with both the Standards for Registering Bodies and Course Accrediting Bodies.

The Council is supported by the Department of Education Services through the services of the Training Accreditation Council Secretariat located in Osborne Park. One of the Secretariat's key roles is to process applications for registration of training organisations and accreditation of courses and skills training programs. The Training Accreditation Council Secretariat also provides substantial support to the work of the Council on policy issues.

The Council formally met 24 times over the twelve months to 30 June 2008.

The Council holds full meetings on a monthly basis to consider applications from organisations, however, in late 2007 the Council agreed to hold meetings every six (6) weeks during 2008 on a trial basis. Executive Committee meetings are held approximately every two (2) weeks to consider additional applications, resulting in Council considering applications with in a relatively short period of time.

PLANNING AND REPORTING FRAMEWORK

In order to carry out its functions, the Council uses an outcomes based planning and reporting framework.

The framework consists of a Strategic Business Plan for the Council that is prepared on a three year basis (from 1 January 2006 – 20 December 2008) and reviewed annually, a corresponding operational plan for the support services provided by the Department of Education Services and an Annual Report on the achievements of the Council. In addition, the Council also reports on VET related outcomes to the National Quality Council each year.

In supporting the work of the Council, the Department of Education Services' operational plan addresses the priorities outlined in the Council's business plan 2006-08. The TAC Secretariat reports progress to the Council.

This approach ensures comprehensive monitoring and reporting of the Council's achievements against the planned outcomes and provides a sound methodology for monitoring progress against the respective business/operational plans.

The Council has developed nine (9) Key Goal Areas that will be the focus of their work over the medium term.

KEY GOAL AREAS

- Role Clarity – To clarify the role of the Council and its relationship to other agencies
- Communication, Advocacy, Feedback – To improve communication and the public face of TAC
- One VET – To achieve a one VET approach for all providers
- Championing Self Improvement & Good Practice Examples – To achieve improved quality through Good Practice Examples
- A Learning Outcomes Focus – To enhance audit processes to include the outcomes of training
- Audit Processes – To develop audit processes so the performance of Registered Training Organisations and the VET system is improved
- Skills Recognition – To improve access to skills recognition through the Training Accreditation Council
- Accreditation – To strengthen the integrity of course accreditation
- National Consistency – To improve national consistency in the application of the AQTF

Sitting underneath the Key Goal Areas are annual Strategies and Measures of Progress that the Council uses to meet and measure their goals. In addition, Guiding Principles have been developed that communicate to the Council's stakeholders the way in which the Council intends to undertake its business.

OUTCOME 1 - Management of Council functions and legislative responsibilities

Outcome Description

The Training Accreditation Council's success in achieving Outcome 1 is demonstrated by the extent to which:

- Council functions are carried out in an appropriate and timely manner through deployment of clear and transparent policies and processes; and
- legislative requirements are met.

Key Goal Areas

- One VET – To achieve a one VET approach for all providers
- A Learning Outcomes Focus – To enhance audit processes to include the outcomes of training
- Audit Processes – To develop audit processes so the performance of Registered Training Organisations and the VET system is improved
- Skills Recognition – To improve access to skills recognition through the Training Accreditation Council
- Accreditation – To strengthen the integrity of course accreditation
- National Consistency – To improve national consistency in the application of the AQTF

REGISTRATION OF TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

There were 1,442 training organisations registered to deliver training in Western Australia on 30 June 2008. A total of 456 of these organisations were registered with the Council and a further 986 were registered to deliver in Western Australia under national recognition arrangements. Forty six (46) of the 456 organisations registered with the Council were also delivering vocational education and training under the AQTF 2007 in countries other than Australia.

Although the number of organisations registered with the Council has increased only slightly there has been an increase of over 200% in the number of renewals of registration endorsed by the Council over the previous reporting period.

A marginal increase has also been noted in the number of registered training organisations delivering in this State under national recognition over the last twelve months.

During the 2007-08 year, the Council endorsed the following applications:

- 51 initial registrations;
- 114 renewals of registration;
- 214 extensions to scope; and
- 421 notifications received from RTOs adding courses/qualifications within their current scope.

During the reporting period no RTOs were de-registered by the Council.

Graph 1: Registration activity July 2007 – June 2008

Applications Endorsed by the Training Accreditation Council

	Initial Registration	Renewal of Registration	Extension to Scope	Addition Within Scope
☐ Jul 07 - Jun 08	51	114	214	421
☐ Jul 06 - Jun 07	57	35	197	523
■ Jul 05 to Jun 06	43	0	155	444
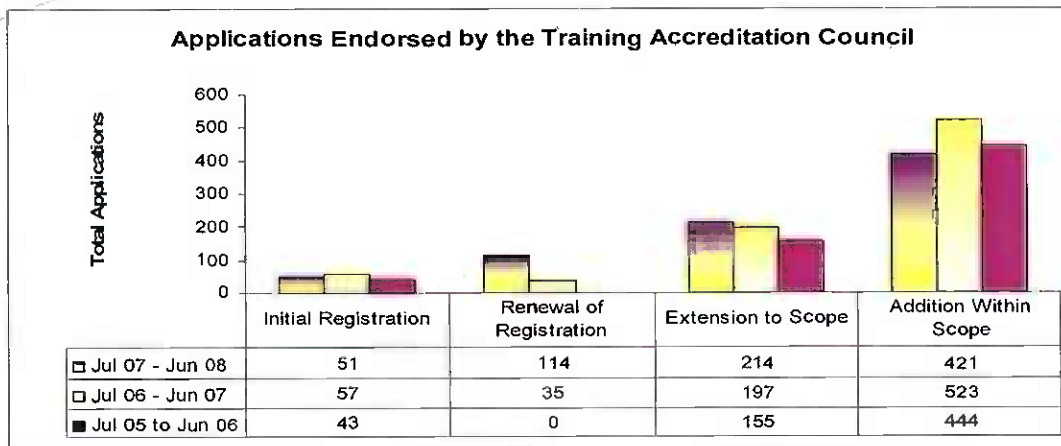
There were 114 renewals of registration endorsed by the Council during the reporting period. The increase in renewals of registration reflects those training organisations whose initial five (5) year period of registration under the AQTF had expired.

NATIONAL RECOGNITION

In addition to training organisations registered by the Council as at 30 June 2008, there were 986 interstate registered training organisations who operate, or planned to operate within Western Australia.

The number of organisations delivering under national recognition does not reflect actual delivery by interstate registered training organisations in Western Australia. Many organisations register with their primary recognition authority their intent to deliver, however, for a variety of reasons fail to follow through with actual delivery.

Graph 2 shows registered training organisations, by State of registration, operating in Western Australia.

Graph 2: Interstate RTOs registered to operate in Western Australia as at 30 June 2008

Number of RTOs Registered to Operate in Western Australia under National Recognition

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	TAS	ACT	NT
☐ Jun-08	348	323	151	83	18	51	12
☐ Jun-07	333	306	125	87	18	45	9
■ Jun-06	287	264	118	84	14	38	10
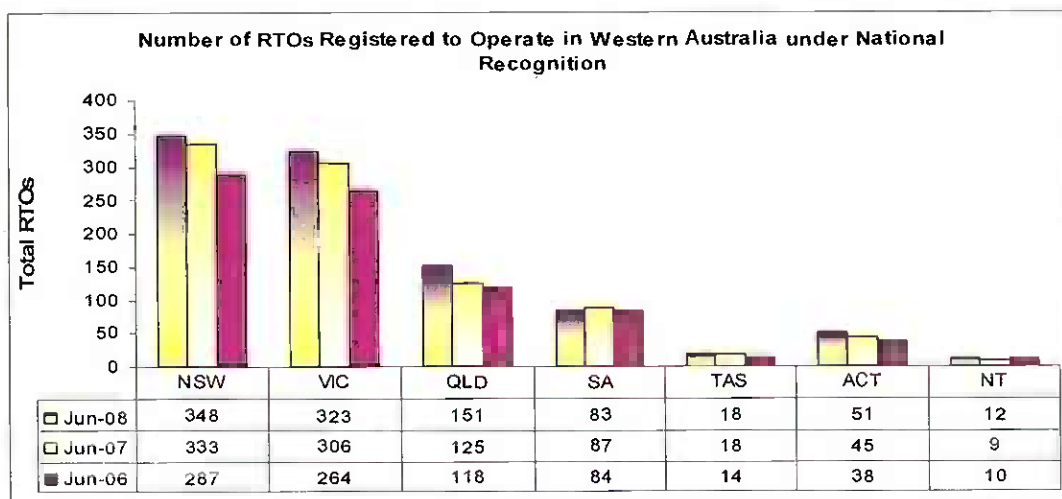
MANAGEMENT OF THE ANNUAL AUDIT SCHEDULE

The Council is responsible for undertaking audits of registered training organisations against the three essential standards for registration specified in the Australian Quality Training Framework. The Council's audit strategy incorporates registration audits as well as strategic industry audits on the basis of identified risks. Wherever possible, these audits are integrated with audits for compliance with the Department of Education and Training's Delivery and Performance Agreement held with private registered training organisations in receipt of public funds.

The Council's integrated approach to auditing helps minimise disruption to registered training organisations. Graph 3 provides information on the type and number of audits conducted in the reporting period.

Graph 3: Total audits July 2007 – June 2008

Total Audits

	Initial Registration	Renewal of Registration	Extension to Scope	Accreditation Reviews	Monitoring Audits
Jul 07 - Jun 08	50	87	77	41	103
Jul 06 - Jun 07	44	50	180	70	116
Jul 05 - Jun 06	47	0	86	55	104

A total of 358 audits were undertaken in the twelve (12) months ending 30 June 2008. This represents a decrease of over 20% from the 2006-07 reporting period. The decrease is a reflection of the implementation of the AQTF 2007 and the incorporation of a risk management approach, which outlines the processes used to determine the scale and scope of an audit. An RTOs risk rating which is determined by evaluating relevant information may result in an RTO not requiring an audit. The increase in re-registration audits can be attributed to those organisations whose initial five (5) year registration under the AQTF had expired.
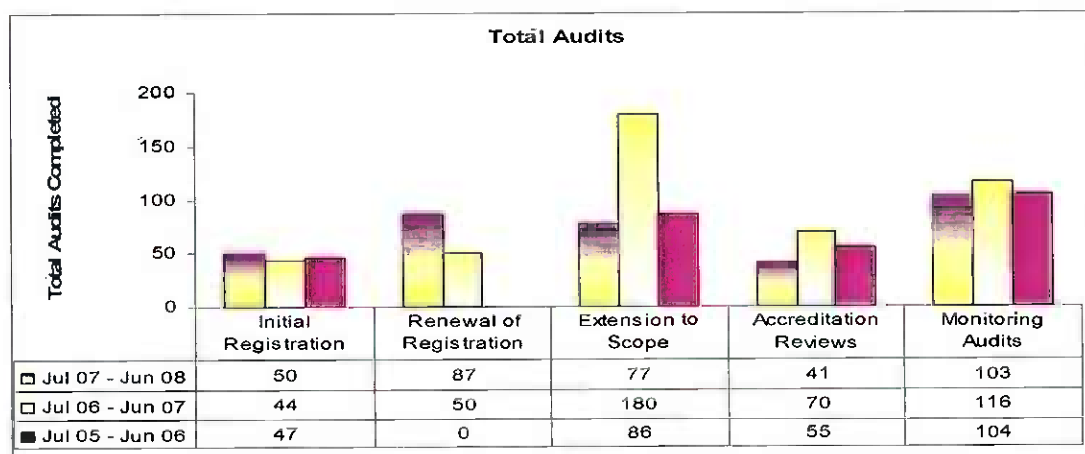
During 2007-08, the number of extension to scope audits decreased significantly. The decrease can be attributed to amendments to the existing audit process, the introduction of national guidelines for risk management and the incorporation of risk assessments for all applications to the Council. The number of accreditation reviews has decreased by over 40% during the reporting period.

Audits were undertaken in line with the 2007 and 2008 audit strategies.

THE 2007 - 2008 AUDIT STRATEGY

During the reporting period the Council as part of its ongoing improvement process reviewed the content and development of the audit strategy, and as a result implemented a continuous audit strategy. This approach will ensure a more flexible and fluid audit strategy, with the ability to address identified issues as they arise, complement the national approach to risk management, and enable monitoring on an ongoing basis. The audit strategy includes

regulatory audits such as registration audits, follow up audits and audits in response to complaints.

Audits conducted by the Council are in accordance with the *AQTF 2007 Standards for State and Territory Registering Bodies* and the Audit Handbook (a reference guide for conducting audits of training organisations against the *AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for Registration*). Non compliances identified at audit were processed in accordance with the *National Guideline for Managing Non-Compliance*.

Applications to the Training Accreditation Council from training organisations are risk assessed in line with the *National Guideline for Risk Management*. Risk indicators which focus on the performance of the RTO delivering quality skills outcomes and supplementary indicators which apply to the operational context of the RTO, determine the type, scale and scope of an audit.

The strategic audit of the delivery of apprenticeships and traineeships commenced in 2007, however, with the implementation of the AQTF 2007 a review was undertaken of the audit methodology. As a result it was determined that the strategic audit was no longer applicable as the introduction of the *National Guideline for Risk Management* helped identify areas of risk, and addressed the recommendations from the State Training Board's Skills Formation Taskforce. Applications from training organisations delivering apprenticeships and traineeships were reviewed and assessed on an ongoing basis to determine auditing requirements.

NATIONAL CONSISTENCY OF THE AUSTRALIAN QUALITY TRAINING FRAMEWORK 2007

During 2007-08, the Training Accreditation Council continued to work collaboratively with the Australian government and State, and Territory governments in the regulation of the VET sector and development of national accreditation standards and guidelines; see below:

- Regulation of VET sector and national consistency - Since the implementation, in July 2007, of revised Australian Quality Training Framework standards, the Department has been an active member of the National Registration and Accreditation Technical Committee to ensure consistency in application and monitoring of the standards and outcomes based auditing across jurisdictions.

- National accreditation standards and guidelines - In October 2007, the National Quality Council (NQC) endorsed the AQTF *2007 Standards for Accredited Courses* and the *AQTF 2007 Standards for State and Territory Course Accrediting Bodies*. The Standards focus on national consistency and support the national vocational education and training system, and complement the work already undertaken in developing the AQTF 2007 registration requirements during the previous reporting period.

  In April 2008, the NQC also endorsed the *AQTF 2007 User's Guide to the Standards for Accredited Courses*, promoting a transparent, nationally consistent and streamlined interpretation of the new Standards. The Guide supports the understanding and application of the Standards and assists course developers and owners.

COURSE ACCREDITATION

At 30 June 2007, there were 389 accredited courses in Western Australia. During 2007-08 the Council approved a total of 67 courses for accreditation and re-accreditation.

Accredited courses meet the training needs not addressed by Training Packages. The Council does not accredit a course if a Training Package qualification exists that can meet the same training outcome through customisation. In 2007-08 the total number of courses accredited decreased by thirteen (13) or over 20% from the previous reporting period. The total number of courses re-accredited by the Council decreased significantly from 71 in 2006-07 to 32 in 2007-08, a drop of over 50% during the reporting period.
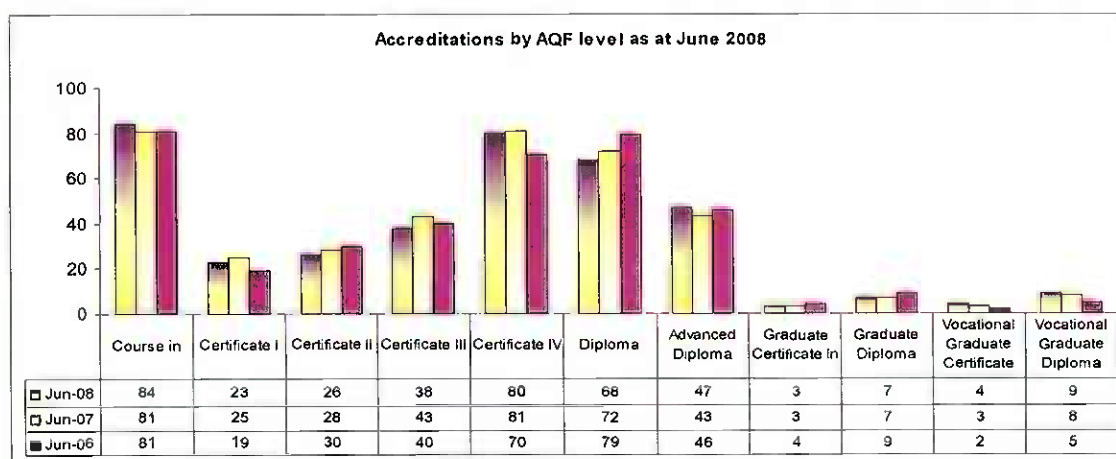
During the reporting period, the Council considered 57 proposals to extend the accreditation period of courses which would have otherwise expired. The Council considers extensions to course accreditations for a range of reasons including expectation that a Training Package qualification may replace the course in the near future or to permit an RTO reasonable changeover time from one course to another.

Table 1 and Graph 4 summarise the accreditation activity undertaken in the reporting period.

Table 1: Accreditation Activity July 2007 – June 2008

Activity	Number of Courses
Courses accredited	35
Courses re-accredited	32
Courses extended	57
Courses expired	45

Graph 4: Accreditation by AQF level July 2007 – June 2008

	Course in	Certificate I	Certificate II	Certificate III	Certificate IV	Diploma	Advanced Diploma	Graduate Certificate In	Graduate Diploma	Vocational Graduate Certificate	Vocational Graduate Diploma
Jun-08	84	23	26	38	80	68	47	3	7	4	9
Jun-07	81	25	28	43	81	72	43	3	7	3	8
Jun-06	81	19	30	40	70	79	46	4	9	2	5

Graph 4 shows the number of accreditations by AQF qualification level has remained relatively unchanged compared with the previous reporting period.

RECOGNITION OF SKILLS AND TRADE CERTIFICATES

One of the Council's functions under the *Vocational Education and Training Act 1996* is skills recognition. Council exercises this function to recognise skills leading to the issuance of a trade certificate in designated trade areas to successful applicants who have not undertaken an indentured Apprenticeship.

The *Trades Skills Recognition Policy* was updated in 2006 to include training organisations already delivering Apprenticeships and Traineeships, to be providers of skills assessment services (in addition to Industry Training Councils (ITCs)) for trade qualification purposes. Further refinements to the policy were introduced in April 2008 to streamline the process for training organisations seeking endorsement from the Council to deliver skills recognition programs. Under this arrangement selected ITCs and RTOs provide skills assessment services for trade qualification purposes.

As at 30 June 2008, five (5) RTOs and seven (7) ITCs had been endorsed by TAC as agents for trade skills recognition. These were:

- Automotive Training Australia (WA) Inc;
- Building and Construction ITC;
- Hospitality and Tourism ITC;
- Light Manufacturing ITC;
- Metals, Manufacturing and Services ITC;
- Wholesale, Retail and Personal Services ITC;
- Western Australian Food and Beverage ITC;
- Australian School of Tourism and Hotel Management;
- Caterpillar Institute (WA) Pty Ltd;
- Challenger TAFE;
- Regional Training Services; and
- Swan TAFE.

From July 2007 to June 2008 there were 164 trade certificates approved for issuance by the Council to individuals assessed as competent in a range of trade areas via the trade skills recognition process. This represents an increase of over 23% from the previous reporting period where a total of 125 trade certificates had been issued. The increase can be attributed to an increase in the number of organisations endorsed by the Council to provide skills recognition services as agents of the Council. As a result of the Council's skills recognition process a significant increase has been experienced in the number of tradespeople in industries impacted by skills shortages.

Graph 5 provides a breakdown of the trade certificates issued by the Council during the reporting period.

Graph 5: Trade certificates issued July 2007 – June 2008
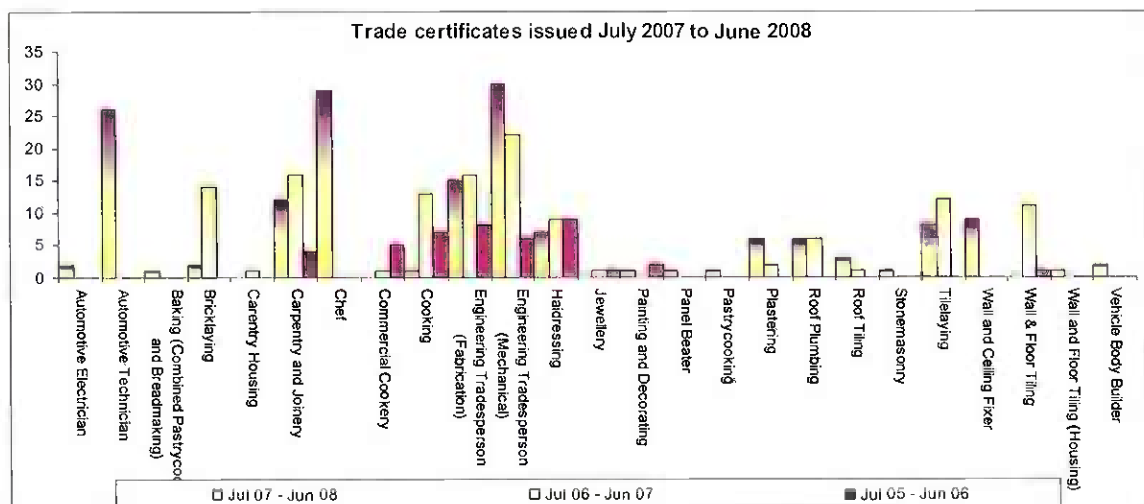
QUALITY ASSURANCE – REGISTERING AND COURSE ACCREDITING BODY REPORTING AND EXTERNAL AUDIT

The *AQTF Standards for Registering Bodies* and the *AQTF Standards for Course Accrediting Bodies* both require that each registering body and course accrediting body report annually to the National Quality Council. As part of these arrangements the Training Accreditation Council reports on its performance in relation to each set of standards and against the quality indicators using national agreed qualitative and quantitative data. These reports inform the national VET sector on quality issues and the management of risks to sustainable quality outcomes.

The Training Accreditation Council reported to the National Quality Council on the operation of the AQTF 2007 in Western Australia for the period July – December 2007. The report addressed implementation and monitoring of the AQTF 2007 during that period and identified emerging trends and issues related to the performance of the Council's regulatory function in Western Australia.

The Training Accreditation Council as both a registering body and course accrediting body is also subject to ongoing monitoring and periodic independent audit of its performance against both sets of AQTF 2007 standards as determined by the National Quality Council.

Due to the national implementation of the AQTF 2007 from 1 July 2007, it was deemed by the National Quality Council that an independent audit of State and Territory Registering Bodies and Course Accrediting Bodies compliance was not required in 2007.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR AUDITORS

The current panels of RTO Auditors and Accreditation Reviewers were appointed through a public tender process and commenced on 1 January 2007. The panel was appointed for a one year period with three one year extension options available.

The primary role of the auditors is to undertake audits of registered training organisations to determine compliance with the *Australian Quality Training Framework Standards 2007 Essential Standards for Registration*. Accreditation Reviewers assist the Council to evaluate submissions for accreditation to ensure that they reflect the requirements of the national standards. In addition, audits of registered training organisations may determine compliance with contracts associated with receipt of public funding for training. Auditors and Accreditations Reviewers appointed to the panel are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Panel of auditors and Accreditation Reviewers as at 30 June 2008

PANEL	AUDITOR	COMPANY
RTO Auditors	Steve Trice	Canington International Training
	Cherrie Hawke	Torque Holdings Pty Ltd
	Sharon Stewart	LCN Training Solutions
	Julie Large	JAL Enterprises
	Russell Docking	Skills Resource Management Systems
	Claire Werner	Applic8
	Clive Seager	Clive Seager Consulting and Training Services
	Helen McCarter	Helen McCarter Consultant
Accreditation Reviewers	Steve Trice	Canington International Training
	Russell Docking	Skills Resource Management Systems
	Cherrie Hawke	Torque Holdings Pty Ltd

The Department, on behalf of the Council, implements a performance management model for the panel of external auditors. Under this model, the Department provides moderation activities to ensure consistency in the approach to auditing. All contracted auditors are required to attend these moderation forums and during the reporting period four auditor moderation forums were conducted. The forums provided auditors with briefings and updates on state and national developments, moderation activities and the opportunity to network and develop an agreed approach for the conduct of audits.

In 2007-08 the Training Accreditation Council also provided support and professional development as part of its commitment to ensuring national consistency. During October 2007 and May 2008 the National Registration and Accreditation Technical Committee held national moderation forums for AQTF auditors across Australia. The forums were hosted in Sydney and Darwin and included representatives from Western Australia.

RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES WITHIN THE VET SECTOR

During 2007-08 a suite of work has been undertaken to identify risks associated with the closure of RTOs and to develop strategies for managing those risks. This work has been progressed in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training and has resulted in the development of:

A Risk Management Policy for At Risk RTOs and A Joint Risk Management Policy for RTOs in Receipt of Public Funding – These policies present a range of strategies designed to minimise risks to VET clients and protect publicly funded training outcomes when an RTO is identified as presenting a significant risk due to their high level of non-compliance with the *AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for Registration*;

Guidelines for the Protection of Fees Paid in Advance – This policy outlines the Council's definition of 'fees paid in advance' and is intended to assist RTOs in determining how they manage the collection of fees paid in advance. RTOs are now required to adopt one of the options that have been approved by the Council in order to meet compliance with the *AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for Registration - Condition of Registration*. The intent of this Guideline is to ensure that mechanisms are in place to protect the student's investment and provide access to funds or a comparable course acceptable to the student at no additional cost, in the event that the RTO ceases to operate or is unable to provide the services outlined in the contract with the student; and

Options for the establishment of a Qualifications Register - this will provide a permanent record of student achievements with RTOs that will be accessible by students in the event that an RTO closes. It is intended that the register will also provide a verification source for employers and contribute to reducing instances of qualifications fraud that arise when an RTO has ceased trading.

The Joint Risk Management Policies and the Guidelines for the Protection of Fees Paid in Advance were endorsed by the Council and have been communicated to all RTOs. Development of a Client Qualifications Register is in progress and will be reported on in the next reporting period.

STREAMLINING REGULATION THROUGH IMPROVED LINKAGES BETWEEN LICIENSING BODIES AND VET REGULATORS

In line with *National Guideline for Industry Regulator Engagement*, the Training Accreditation Council has been engaging with key industry regulatory bodies to build the confidence of industry regulators that the training and assessment practices of RTOs adequately address their regulatory requirements.

The engagement process with each industry regulator is based on the protocols of consultation, information sharing and contribution of resources. The arrangements for ongoing engagement are determined by the requirements of the specific industry regulator including strategies for involving the industry regulator in the audit process.

Consultations have been undertaken with key regulatory bodies in Western Australia and have included: WorkSafe; Office of Energy; WA Police, Licensing Enforcement Division; Maritime Safety Authority; the Plumbers Licensing Board; the Hairdressers' Registration Board; the Builders' Registration Board; and the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Passenger Services.

OUTCOME 2 – Effective Working Relationships with Key Stakeholders and Clients

Outcome Description

The Training Accreditation Council's success in achieving Outcome 2 is demonstrated by the extent to which:

- stakeholders and clients are aware of Council requirements and priorities; and
- Council requirements are deployed by stakeholders and clients.

Key Goal Areas

- Role Clarity – To clarify the role of the Council and its relationship to other agencies
- Communication, Advocacy, Feedback – To improve communication and the public face of TAC
- Championing Self Improvement & Good Practice Examples – To achieve improved quality through Good Practice Examples
- National Consistency – To improve national consistency in the application of the AQTF
- One VET – To achieve a one VET approach for all providers

Work undertaken by the Council to progress these priorities and to achieve Outcome 2 is detailed in the following sections.

CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

During 2007-08 the Council actively consulted with a range of stakeholders including government departments, industry training councils, registered training organisations, TAFEWA Managing Directors, and peak bodies to ensure stakeholders were aware of the Council's requirements and priorities with respect to the quality assurance and recognition of vocational education and training in Western Australia.

This year the Council's consultative processes focused on the implementation of the AQTF 2007 and service provision. As a result the Council focused on ensuring stakeholders were provided with relevant information on the new standards, application processes and audit requirements.

The Council also collects feedback from registered training organisations following completion of the audit process. The feedback is incorporated into the Council's continuous improvement processes and is reported on a biannual basis. The survey results for the 2007-08 reporting period showed that 92% of respondents found that the audit process added value to their business.

As a result of consultations with stakeholders regarding the role of the Council, an external contractor was engaged during 2007 to review the Council's communication with its clients and stakeholders. The contractor identified a lack of awareness amongst stakeholders about the role and function of the Council and a lack of clarity about the linkages between the Council and other organisations.

The Council agreed to address this issue through a review of communications which resulted in the development of a communication plan with specific strategies to improve the Council's

communications with stakeholders. One of the strategies was to design an improved and consistent look to the Council's corporate communications including documents, stationery, and website.

The design work for this project has been completed and will be reflected in the Council's communications with clients and stakeholders, including the development and design of the annual report.

EFFECTIVENESS OF COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCESS

One of the important functions provided by the Department of Education Services on behalf of the Training Accreditation Council is the investigation of complaints made by sector stakeholders. Complaints may result in registered training organisations being audited but are often resolved through discussion with the affected parties. The management of complaints is in accordance with the Council's established policy, which is published and available on the Council's website at www.tac.wa.gov.au, and the *National Guideline for Responding to Complaints* about vocational education and training quality.

During the 2007-08 reporting period thirty five (35) complaints were received by the Council, three (3) less than for the previous reporting period. Of the 35 complaints received, four (4) complaints were lodged against registered training organisations from other jurisdictions and subsequently forwarded to the appropriate registering body. Nine (9) of these complaints remained open and were under investigation as at 30 June 2008.

Table 3 shows a breakdown of the main categories of complaints that were investigated by the Training Accreditation Council during the period.

Table 3: Complaint categories

COMPLAINT CATEGORIES
Training and assessment strategies and staff, facilities, equipment and training and assessment materials
Assessment, including Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
Access and Equity and outcomes for clients

MEETING OF CHAIRS FROM STATE AND TERRITORY REGISTERING BODIES

The Chairs of State and Territory Registering Bodies met once during the reporting period. The meeting was held in Tasmania on 8 November 2007 and agenda items discussed included:

- National Quality Arrangements for VET;
- AQTF 2007 implementation; and
- National auditing and registration arrangements.

These meetings provide states and territories with the opportunity to discuss a range of matters relating to their functions and initiatives to ensure and promote national consistency.

Provision of consumer information

The Council actively undertakes information provision including the development of support materials to promote and ensure the quality of vocational education and training in Western Australia. It is important that clients and stakeholders are fully aware of quality assurance and recognition arrangements.

A range of activities were undertaken during the reporting period to provide information to stakeholders. These included:

Publication of all documents on one convenient CD

All documents listed on the Council's website were published to one convenient CD and is available to existing and prospective RTOs. This information also includes templates and forms to assist with the registration and accreditation process undertaken by the TAC Secretariat on behalf of the Council.

Publication of Council newsletters

The Council electronically publishes the *TAC Update* newsletter. The newsletter provides relevant, up-to-date information and advice on all aspects of the vocational education and training system related to the Council's functions.

Council website

The website is the Council's main communication tool and as such the content for the website is regularly reviewed and refined. The content of the website focuses on the Council's core business and provides links to other organisations that provide relevant related information for its clients and stakeholders.

Participation in the WA Training Awards

Each year, Council members either Chair or participate on judging panels for the WA Training Awards. In addition, the Council as part of its commitment to quality and excellence sponsors the 'Trainer of the Year Award' category of the WA Training Awards, with support from the Department of Education Services.

The WA Training Awards showcase the best in Western Australian vocational and education and training. The Awards recognise the outstanding endeavours of apprentices, trainees and vocational students, and the contribution to training made by trainers, training organisations and employers.

Participation in Training Forums

The Council provided an information stand at the Training Forum conducted by the Department of Education and Training in May 2008. The Training Forum provides a key professional development opportunity for VET practitioners and the Council's information stand enables training organisations to access up to date information on the VET sector.

RTONet

RTONet is an electronic system managed by the Department of Education and Training, which provides RTOs with direct access to information linked to their registration.

Registered training organisations can view their registration details with the Council including their contact details, scope of registration and delivery profile. They can also view

qualifications/course details and the Training Records System on Traineeships and Apprenticeships. *RTONet* has proved a successful resource for registered training organisations in monitoring their registration activities.

SUPPORT PRODUCTS

A range of material is available to assist applicants seeking registration with the Council, including guides for applicants and application templates. A significant amount of this material is available on the Council's website.

The Council in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training has also produced a publication titled *Students' Guide to Training Getting Started*, the guide has been developed to assist prospective clients of training organisations. The Guide provides a range of information to assist clients in the selection of appropriate training.

OUTCOME 3 – Effective AQTF Support Services to Registered Training Organisations

Outcome Description

The Training Accreditation Council's success in achieving Outcome 3 is demonstrated by the extent to which:

- RTOs are aware of the requirements of the Australian Quality Training Framework 2007 Essential Standards for Registration; and
- RTOs implement the Australian Quality Training Framework 2007 requirements.

Key Goal Areas

- One VET – To achieve a one VET approach for all providers
- Communication, Advocacy, Feedback – To improve communication and the public face of TAC
- National Consistency – To improve national consistency in the application of the AQTF
- Championing Self Improvement & Good Practice Examples – To achieve improved quality through Good Practice Examples

Work undertaken by the Council to progress these priorities and to achieve Outcome 3 is detailed in the following sections.

WORKSHOPS FOR RTOS

Workshops have been provided to promote knowledge and understanding of national and State policies, including the concept of training packages, competency based assessment and processes for registration and accreditation. Specific workshops include:

REGISTRATION INFORMATION SESSIONS

The TAC Secretariat provided free one on one information sessions to organisations and individuals considering becoming RTOs. These sessions provided an overview of the opportunities and responsibilities under the AQTF associated with being an RTO and the process for registration. The sessions helped organisations consider all available options and and make an informed decision in relation to becoming an RTO.

The structure of the sessions was largely participant driven, with information based on the requirements of the organisation or individual. The sessions were flexible and aimed to provide the participant with the information required to continue on their chosen path. Key areas discussed include:

- National Skills Framework
- Rights and Responsibilities of RTOs
- Alternatives to Registration
- The Registration Process
    - The application process (incl. Self Assessment)
    - The audit process
- Course Accreditation (where appropriate)
- Where to from Here?

REGISTRATION STANDARDS WORKSHOPS

A full day workshop designed for training organisations that have decided to become a registered training organisation and existing registered training organisations going through renewal of registration. The workshops were conducted by members of the Council's external panel of auditors and provide an understanding of the registration process, assistance in interpreting the registration standards and understanding the role of evidence in the submission process.

HELP – THE AQTF AUDITOR IS COMING! WORKSHOP

The Council has implemented workshops that assist training organisations understand the audit process by describing what to expect from an audit and providing useful strategies to help them through the audit process. The Council provided 86 workshops and information sessions to registered training organisations during the reporting period. A breakdown of the type and number of workshops conducted is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Workshops delivered to training organisations for the period July 2007 - June 2008

TYPE OF WORKSHOP / SESSION	No Of WORKSHOPS / SESSIONS CONDUCTED	TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
AQTF Registration Standards	3	19
Help – the AQTF Auditor is Coming	3	23
Information Sessions	80	99

In addition to delivering the workshops, the TAC Secretariat regularly reviews the content and delivery style of the workshops to ensure that the information provided is accurate and delivered through the most appropriate medium.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING ORGANISATIONS

To assist the Council, the Department of Education and Training provides a range of professional development opportunities for practitioners within the VET sector in Western Australia. The development opportunities consist of three categories and include:

- VET Sector workshops – provide a variety of information sessions and workshops relating to the VET sector;
- Practitioner workshops – which are designed to develop and enhance the training and assessment skills of VET practitioners; and
- Technologies workshops – provides participants with training in the use of a variety of E-Learning tools to assist with training and assessment.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON THE COUNCIL'S WEBSITE

The website is the public face of the Training Accreditation Council, its policies, processes and functions; and the operations of the TAC Secretariat. The website is a source of reference for training organisations on a range of topics including registration; the AQTF; accreditation of courses; the audit process; and as a point of reference for other VET related matters.

The website is now the centre of the Council's communication strategy and provides the most up to date information about the operation of the Council. The main users of the website were RTOs or prospective RTOs and as such, the website provides content that best meets their needs.

The Council's website has received positive feedback from a range of stakeholders who have confirmed that the interface provides them with the information they want when they need it.

APPENDIX 1 - Glossary of Terms

Accreditation means the formal recognition of a course by the State or Territory course accrediting body in line with the *AQTF 2007 Standards for State and Territory Course Accrediting Bodies.*

Accredited course means a structured sequence of vocational education and training that has been accredited and leads to an Australian Qualifications Framework qualification or Statement of Attainment.

Apprenticeship/traineeship means a structured training arrangement for a person employed under an apprenticeship/traineeship training contract. It usually involves the person receiving training and being assessed both on and off the job.

Assessment means a process of collecting evidence and making judgements on whether competency has been achieved, to confirm that an individual can perform to the standard expected in the workplace, as expressed in the relevant endorsed industry/enterprise competency standards of a Training Package or by the learning outcomes of an accredited course.

Audit means a planned, systematic and documented process used to assess an RTO's compliance with the *AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for Registration.* State and Territory registering bodies conduct independent audits as a condition of regisitration. RTOs can conduct internal audits to assess their compliance with the standards and their own policies and procedures as part of their continuous improvement process.

Auditor means an independent person recognised by the Training Accreditation Council to ensure that the AQTF standards for registration/accreditation have been adequately addressed by an RTO.

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) means the policy framework that defines all qualifications recognised in post-compulsory education and training in Australia. The AQF comprises titles and guidelines that define each qualification, as well as the principles and protocols covering cross-sectoral qualification links and the issuing of qualifications and statements of attainment.

Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) means a set of of nationally agreed quality assurance arrangements for training and assessment services delivered by training organisations.

Complaints process means a process by which a client of an RTO, or other interested parties, may raise a concern about the RTO's policies, procedures, services or products with a view to having them changed and improved.

Course accrediting body means the authority responsible, under the VET legislation and decision-making framework of a particular State or Territory, for accrediting courses for delivery both inside and outside Australia.

Internal audit means audits conducted by, or on behalf of, the organisation itself for internal purposes.

National Quality Council (NQC) means a committee of the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education. The NQC has a role in:

(a)   providing the Ministerial Council with advice on the operation of the AQTF 2007 and any changes to it that are considered necessary.

(b)   providing the State and Territory registering and course-accrediting bodies with information and advice on implementation of the AQTF 2007.

(c)   providing the Ministerial Council with information and advice on the operation of the AQTF 2007 in each state and territory, including advice on their registration, audit and related processes, and on the Commonwealth processes that support the AQTF 2007.

National recognition applies nationally and means:

(a)   The recognition by an RTO of the AQF qualifications and statements of attainment issued by other RTOs, thereby enabling national recognition of the qualifications and statements of attainment issued to any person.

(b)   The recognition by each State and Territory's registering body of the training organisations registered by any other States or Territory's registering body and of its registration decisions.

(c)   The recognition by all state and territory course accrediting bodies and registering bodies of the courses accredited by each State or Territory's course-accrediting body and of its accreditiaiton decisions.

National Skills Framework (NSF) means the system of VET that:

(a)   applies nationally
(b)   is endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education.

National Training Information Service (NTIS) means the national register for recording information about RTOs, Training Packages and accredited courses. NTIS is part of the National Skills Framework.

Registering body means the authority responsible, under the VET legislation and decision-making framework of a particular State and Terrritory, and in accordance with the *AQTF 2007 Standards for State and Territory Registering Bodies*, for registering training organisations, including all the processes relating to registration and the imposition of sanctions on RTOs.

Registration means the formal recognition by a State or Territory registering body, in accordance with the *AQTF 2007 Standards for State and Territory Registering Bodies*, that a

training organisation meets the requirements of the *AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for Registration*. A training organisation must be registered in order to deliver and assess nationally recognised training and issue nationally recognised qualifications.

Registered Training Organisation (RTO) means a training organisation registered by a State or Territory registering body in accordance with the *AQTF 2007 Essential Standards for Registration* within a defined scope of registration. A training organisation must be registered in order to deliver and assess nationally recognised training and issue nationally recognised qualifications.

Scope of registration means the particicluar services and products an RTO is registered to provide. The RTO's scope defines the specific AQF qualifications, units of competency and accredited courses it is registered to provide, and whether it is registered to provide:

(a)   both training delivery and assessment services, and to issue the relvant AQF qualifications and statements of attainment, or

(b)   only assessment services, and to issue AQF qualifications and statements of attainment.

Statement of Attainment means a formal certification in the VET sector by an RTO that a person has achieved:

(a)   part of an AQF qualification, or

(b)   one or more units of competency from a nationally endorsed Training Package, or

(c)   all the units of competency or modules comprising an accredited short course (meaning an accredited course that does not meet the requirements for a full AQF qualification).

Strategic Industry Audit means the audit of RTOs operating in a specific industry or industry sector targeted on the basis of identified risks relating to that industry or sector.

Training Package means a nationally endorsed, integrated set of competency standards, asessment guidelines and AQF qualifications for a specific industry, industry sector or enterprise.

Training products means Training Packages qualifications and accredited courses.

APPENDIX 2 – Acronyms

AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
AQTF	Australian Quality Training Framework
AQTF 2007	Australian Quality Training Framework 2007
ITC	Industry Training Council
NQC	National Quality Council
NSF	National Skills Framework
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
TAC	Training Accreditation Council
VET	Vocational Education and Training