

## RETHINKING EQUITY IN TERTIARY EDUCATION – WHY WE NEED TO THINK AS ONE SECTOR AND NOT TWO

*Leesa Wheelahan*

*L.H. Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Management, University of Melbourne*

Equity policy in Australian tertiary education is differentiated by educational sector, with the higher education and vocational education and training sectors having different policies, and in some cases, different definitions of equity groups. This is problematic because pathways from VET to higher education are meant to act as an equity mechanism by providing students from disadvantaged backgrounds with access to higher education. This paper examines equity policies and definitions in both sectors, and it examines data on student pathways within VET and between VET and higher education. It finds that, apart from students with disabilities, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are over-represented in VET and under-represented in higher education. However, students from disadvantaged backgrounds are over-represented in lower-level VET qualifications and under-represented in higher-level qualifications, particularly in diplomas and advanced diplomas. This matters because diplomas are the ‘transition’ qualification which VET students use as the basis for admission to higher education. The paper argues that the diploma is the key qualification for equity policy in *both* VET and higher education. Rather than separate VET and higher education equity policies and separate sectoral policies that mean pathways are of some importance only ‘at the borders’, a *tertiary* education policy framework will be needed that considers equity outcomes and pathways within and between sectors and places these outcomes as key concerns of both sectors.

The paper first problematises the extent to which pathways are able to act as a mechanism to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access higher level studies. Second, reasons why we need to consider equity from a post-compulsory or tertiary education perspective are presented, and it argues that the diploma is the key qualification for pathways and thus for equity policy. This is followed by an analysis of the relative position of equity groups in VET. Finally, the paper considers the implications for equity policy.

### **Meritocracy or social reproduction?**

It almost taken for granted by policy makers and educational researchers that pathways from VET to higher education will provide disadvantaged students with a ‘second chance’ to access higher education and the social, cultural and economic benefits this brings.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, in countries such as Australia, the key problem for policy has been how to increase pathways from VET to higher education rather than examining the extent to which pathways effectively act as an equity mechanism.

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<sup>1</sup> This is exemplified in a recent Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development report on tertiary education which argued that formal and institutionalised arrangements between institutions that facilitate student transfers can help to promote equity by increasing opportunities for disadvantaged students to access higher status tertiary education institutions (Santiago, Tremblay et al. 2008: 49).

Pathways are rarely problematised because they can be supported by those with opposing theoretical premises, although for different reasons. Moore (2004) broadly distinguishes between liberal and social reproduction theoretical analyses of education. Both agree that the purpose of education is to act as mechanism for social selection and socialisation, however liberal theorists think that this contributes to social cohesion based on meritocratic principles, while social reproduction theorists are more critical and think that this contributes to the reproduction of inequality and existing social power relations (Brennan and Naidoo 2008). Liberal theorists emphasise the development of human capital, civic values, a meritocratic selection system and open societies characterised by social mobility. Social reproduction theorists emphasise the way education contributes to reproducing existing power relations thus reinforcing privilege and dominance (to those that have, more shall be given) (Moore 2004). In citing Moore, Brennan and Naidoo (2008: 289) explain that “these two theoretical positions are not necessarily contradictory: reproduction may occur but it does not have to be *perfect*.”

Pathways are seen as one way of resolving the tension between meritocratic discourses and social justice principles. Our education systems are meant to be meritocratic but they fall short of achieving this goal, as evidenced by the under-representation of disadvantaged students in higher education. For liberal theorists, pathways provide a ‘second chance’ that will help overcome social disadvantage and thus ensure education is indeed meritocratic. In contrast, pathways may provide social reproduction theorists with mechanisms to challenge the intrinsically unfair structure of education and hegemonic power relations, and so the focus is on addressing the elitism of universities and their reluctance to take more pathways students.

This paper argues that while pathways *may* contribute to equity, it cannot be taken for granted that they *will* do so. The concept that student transfers from the lower status, ‘second’ sector of tertiary education to higher status universities promote social opportunity and mobility was first problematised in 1960 in a now famous article by Burton Clarke. He argued that community colleges in the United States can contribute to ‘cooling out’ students’ aspirations to go to four year colleges so that they are diverted from their original goals and instead embrace more ‘realistic’ outcomes. This process occurs through ‘substitute achievement, gradual disengagement, denial, consolation, and avoidance of standards’ (Clark 1960: 569). Grubb (2006: 33) argues this need not always be so, and he says that students’ aspirations can be ‘heated up’ as well as ‘cooled out’.

We don’t have a very good understanding of VET students’ aspirations in Australia. Bett et al. (2008) found in a study of students in years 9-12 in Melbourne’s western region that students from low SES backgrounds had high aspirations to go to university, even if they were not as high as those from high SES backgrounds. They also found that the number of students from schools in the western region who went to university was lower than the number who had aspirations to do so, and they called this the aspiration gap. Many of these students would go to VET, but we don’t know what happens to their aspirations once there. This study alerts us that we need to challenge the taken for granted assumption in Australia that students from low SES backgrounds don’t aspire to higher education. We need a better understanding of VET

students' aspirations more broadly to see if they are cooled out or heated up by their participation in VET.

We also need strategies to ensure VET students' aspirations are heated up if pathways are to act as an equity mechanism for disadvantaged students. We cannot focus *just* on the entry policies of universities, although this is important. As explained below, a key issue for equity policy for *both* sectors is how to get students from equity groups into diplomas because this will provide them with the benefits of higher level VET qualifications, and it will provide them with access to higher education. If students from equity groups are concentrated in low level VET qualifications then arguably VET is not contributing to social justice, but rather to entrenching social disadvantage – in both VET and higher education. Both liberal and social reproduction theorists thus need to focus on what happens in VET, as well as what happens in universities.

### **Why the diploma is the key**

The Australian government has set ambitious targets in all sectors of education. It wants to increase the school retention rate, halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 (or equivalent), double the number of VET higher qualifications completions, raise the proportion of students from a low socio-economic (SES) background in higher education, and raise the proportion of the population aged between 25-34 years with a degree (Commonwealth of Australia 2009: 12). Each sector relies on the other to fulfil these targets, because there needs to be a bigger pool of qualified applicants at every level to fulfil higher level targets. Pathways consequently need to be at the centre of qualifications in all sectors, and not just at the margins.

The diploma is the key to pathways because it is the main qualification that students use to access higher education. Generally speaking, VET students who apply for place in a university are offered places at a similar rate to other categories of non-school leaver applicants, at least up until 2008 (Wheelahan 2009: 8).<sup>2</sup> This has been the case up to now, but it must be monitored to make sure that VET articulators continue to get access as demand for higher education places increases as a consequence of the worsening economy.

Stanwick's (2006: 31-32) work shows that young people are using diplomas and advanced diplomas as pathways to university. In 2003, around 32% of diploma and advanced diploma graduates aged between 15-24 years went on to study at university, and in some business sub-fields of education this was as high as 54%. In the same year, just over 30% of students commencing degrees aged 25 years and over had a diploma or above,<sup>3</sup> which shows that older students are also using diplomas as a stepping stone to higher education.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> At least, this is the case in Victoria and NSW which were the only two states in 2008 to make this information publicly available on their websites (Wheelahan 2009: 8). In Victoria students with completed TAFE diplomas did not receive as many offers in 2008 as did school leavers, but they received similar offer rates compared to those with completed and incomplete higher education qualifications.

<sup>3</sup> Derived from Stanwick (2006: Table 7, p. 17).

<sup>4</sup> In 2003, 14% of VET diploma and advanced diploma graduates aged 25 and over went on to study a degree (Stanwick 2006: 31-32). While this is lower compared to younger students, it must be

However, the overall percentage of students in higher education with diplomas and advanced diplomas as their prior highest qualification has declined from 2003, which is the year cited by Stanwick. In 2003, almost 14% of students commencing undergraduate higher education had a prior completed TAFE qualification, compared to just over 10% in 2007. This may in part reflect increased access by other types of applicants to higher education, but it may also be because student enrolments in VET diplomas and advanced diplomas have remained static (at around 10% of all VET students) or declined from 2003, and this is particularly marked in some states and some fields of education (Karmel 2008).<sup>5</sup>

## Participation of equity groups in VET

It is well understood that the main equity groups are under-represented in higher education and that they are over-represented in VET, with the exception of students with disabilities who are under-represented. This is illustrated in Table 1

**Table 1: Participation rate of equity groups in HE in 2007 & VET in 2008 & proportion in general population**

Equity	2007 participation rate % in HE	2008 participation rate % in VET	Proportion % in general population *
Non-English speaking background ^	3.8	14.6	3.7 HE/15.6 VET <sup>^</sup>
Students with disabilities ^^	4.1	5.9	8.0 HE/20.0 VET ^^
Rural/Regional#	18.1	38.3	25.4
Remote#	1.1	4.6	2.5
Low SES	15.0	28.8 in 2001	25.0
Indigenous	1.3	4.3	2.2

See Notes on Table 1 in Appendix one

However, the data about equity groups in VET are not straight forward. This is illustrated in Table 2 below. If equity groups had their proportionate share of VET qualifications, around 10% of students in each group should be studying in diplomas or above, and around 11% should be studying certificate IVs, and so on. This is also applicable for lower-level VET qualifications where just over 22% of all VET students are enrolled in certificates I and II. In contrast, 32% of all low SES students are enrolled in these qualifications as are around 27% of all rural/remote students,<sup>6</sup> almost 31% of all students with disabilities, and almost 40% of all Indigenous students. Students from a low SES background are a designated equity group in higher education, but not in VET. It has been assumed that VET pathways have provided low SES students with access to higher education; however they only do so to a modest extent. In 2007, around 20% of students admitted to undergraduate programs in universities on the basis of prior VET studies were from a low SES

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remembered that the VET sector has more older students than younger students, and overall VET has many more students than the higher education sector.

<sup>5</sup> The NCVER (2009: Table 4) shows that almost 11% of VET students were enrolled in diplomas or above in 2003, and just over 10% were enrolled in these qualifications in 2008.

<sup>6</sup> The regional/remote categories are calculated differently in tables 1 and 2 so HE could be compared to VET in Table 1. The reference value in the community for the Rural/Remote group in Table 2 is 19.4% so they are over-presented in lower VET qualifications and under-represented in higher VET qualifications. See the notes on Table 2 in the appendices for an explanation about the way is category includes 'outer regional, remote and very remote' is derived.

background, not much more than the 17% of all students overall, and lower than the 25% they should be (Wheelahen 2009).

**Table 2: Share of qualification level by VET equity group in 2008**

	Dip or higher	Cert IV	Cert III	Certs I & II	Other
Low SES in 2001*	6.8	9.2	19.5	31.8	32.6
Non-English speaking background	16.8	11.5	24.6	24.3	22.8
Rural/Remote **	4.6	9.4	32.6	27.4	25.9
Students with disabilities	8.3	9.5	22.2	30.7	29.3
Indigenous students	3.6	7.2	26	39.6	23.5
<b>All VET students</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>30.6</b>	<b>22.3</b>	<b>25.9</b>

See Notes on Table 2 in Appendix one

## Outcomes from VET pathways

VET measures graduate outcomes by the percentage of graduates who were in employment *and/or* further study post-training; the percentage who were in employment; and the percentage who were in further study. The tables that follow present the outcomes for government funded TAFE graduates rather than all publicly funded graduates because the data are more extensive. Table 3 shows that overall, the percentage in employment *and/or* further study declined by almost 6% from 2003 – 2009. The percentage in employment is not much different, while the percentage in further study declined by almost 8% (NCVER 2009: Table 2). The employment rate dropped from 2008 – 2009, reflecting the declining economy, and while the further study rates increased by 2.6% over the last two years, they have not reached the high point in 2003. The proposition that the high study rate in 2003 may have been an anomaly is not supported: the further study rates in 2001 and 2002 were quite high, almost 39% and 40% respectively – so the trend was up to 2003, and then down.

**Table 3: Employment & further study outcomes for government funded TAFE graduates 2003 – 2009 # ^**

	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %	2006 %	2007 %	2008 %	2009 %	% difference 2007-2003
Employed or in further study after training	92.3	85.7	87.8	86.7	88.3	88.5	86.4	-5.9
Employed after training	73.9	74.6	76.5	77.4	78.8	78.2	74.7	+0.8
In further study after training	43.3	32.4	35.1	32.8	32.8	35.4	35.4	7.9

See Notes on Table 3 in Appendix one

The decline in the further study rate can partly be explained by the very strong labour market in Australia until the global financial crisis. Demand for tertiary education declines when there are skill shortages and strong demand for labour. So, while this can in part account for the decline in further study outcomes, it also partly accounts for the increase in employment outcomes for VET graduates from 2003 until 2008, and the decline in 2009. Indeed, of those graduates seeking an employment outcome, 75.3% were employed *prior* to training in 2008, compared to 72.7% in 2003 – a rise of 2.6%.<sup>7</sup> The further study outcomes are worrying because one purpose of VET

<sup>7</sup> It must be noted that the 'gap' between those who worked prior to study and those who were employed after study increased from 2003 – 2008. The 2003 percentage for those employed prior to

qualifications is to provide access to higher level qualifications for efficiency reasons by ‘upskilling’ the workforce, but also for equity reasons as discussed above.

The strong labour market does not, however, account for the outcomes all groups of VET graduates. Some 17.8% of 2008 government funded TAFE graduates indicated that the reason they embarked on their VET program was for a personal development outcome (DEEWR 2009: Table A2.1). The employment rate for this group rose by 1.8% from 2003-2008, while the further study outcome declined by 7.2%.<sup>8</sup>

The outcomes for graduates aged between 15-19 years, as shown in Table 4, are particularly worrying. Going back further to 2001 shows that the employment rate after training for this group declined by almost 3% from 2001 – 2008, while the percentage who were employed or were in further study declined by just over 5%. The peak in the rate of those who were employed or in further study was in 2003, and this declined by 7.2% to 2008. While other age groups also experienced a decline in those who were employed or in further study from 2003, they generally had stronger growth in the percentage employed after training, at least up until 2008.

**Table 4: Employment & further study outcomes for government funded TAFE graduates 2003 – 2008 aged between 15 – 19 years**

	2001 %	2002 %	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %	2006 %	2007 %	2008 %	2008- 2001 %
Employed after training	73	71	68.7	68.3	70.8	71.5	69.9	70.2	-2.8
Employed or in further study after training	90	89	92.1	83.6	86.8	85.1	84.3	84.9	-5.1

See Notes on Table 4 in Appendix one

Karmel (2007: 20) explains that overall, employment outcomes for young people have been quite good, but this is to be expected seeing that they are in transition and we would expect their employment rates to improve. Completing VET does make a difference however, because young VET graduates have better employment outcomes than those who only complete modules. In contrast, the further study outcomes for young people in VET aged under 25 are not as good. While 40% of young VET graduates in 2004 proceeded to further study in 2005 (Karmel 2007: Table 18),<sup>9</sup> only a minority actually complete a qualification and so qualify as a graduate. Karmel (2007: 25) explains that:

Completion rates are variable, and 12% of students have no recorded achievement at all.<sup>10</sup> Relatively few young people graduate at certificate III or higher, and only a small proportion of people undertaking certificates I and II complete the qualification and move on to further training. (Karmel 2007: 25)

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training is from DEEWR (2008: Table A2.2), while the percentage for 2008 is from DEEWR (2009: Table 2.2). I don’t have the percentages for those employed prior to training for 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Source for 2003 is DEEWR (2008: Table 2.4), source for 2008 is DEEWR (2009: Table A2.4).

<sup>9</sup> Of these, 25% went to university, around 53% went to TAFE, and a further 20% went to other VET providers (derived from Karmel 2007: Table 18).

<sup>10</sup> This means that 12% of those aged between 15 – 19 years ‘have not passed a single subject in their period of study.’ (Karmel 2007: 17).

## Outcomes from certificates I and II

The outcomes for young people undertaking Certificates I and II are particularly poor.<sup>11</sup> The data are a bit old (2002/2003), and they have not been updated in the same form by the NCVET, but there is no reason to think that it has improved, particularly in light of the decline in employment and further outcomes for VET graduates aged between 15-19 years discussed earlier. In summary, the findings for those students aged between 15-24 years are that:

- 32.9% will complete a certificate I, and 42.5% will complete a certificate II;
- 14.5% of all certificate I students will complete a further qualification, as will 27.4% of all certificate II students;
- 'reasonable' proportions of 15-19 year old certificate I and II graduates will gain fulltime employment, although fewer than certificate III graduates;
- certificate I graduates aged 20-24 years have very poor employment outcomes; certificate II graduates have better outcomes, but these are much worse than certificate III graduates; and,
- the outcomes for those who do not complete are commensurably worse across all dimensions (Stanwick 2005).

The findings for mature aged students aged 25 years and over undertaking certificates I and II are worse:

- around 24% of certificate I and II students will complete, except for those aged between 25 – 44 years undertaking certificates II who have a higher projected completion rate of almost 30% (Stanwick 2006: 14);
- 10-15% of mature aged certificate I and II students will proceed to study at a higher level;
- Small proportions of graduates and subject completers who were not employed prior to training were in fulltime or part-time jobs after training; however, the fulltime employment rates were not much better for certificate III graduates; and,<sup>12</sup>
- 35% and 39% of certificate I and II graduates aged between 25-44 years have a certificate III or above as their prior highest level of education, as do 43% and 42% of certificate I and II graduates aged 45 years and over. (Stanwick 2006: 13)

Some mature aged graduates with higher level qualifications enrol in certificates I and II for employment related reasons, but this is a minority and the outcomes for these

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<sup>11</sup> VET certificates I and II are divided between vocational qualifications designed to equip students with basic vocational skills and knowledge as preparation for work in particular industries, to support career advancement, and to provide pathways to further study. The second category consists of preparatory qualifications designed to provide students with basic literacy and numeracy skills, and basic skills in job-seeking, employment and personal survival (Stanwick 2005: 19). The latter are called 'mixed field' enrolments and they constitute about 47% of enrolments of young people in certificate I and about 10% of enrolments in certificate II. The outcomes for young people in mixed field programs are even poorer than for certificate I and II students overall. Only 24% will complete a certificate I and 28% will complete a certificate II (Stanwick 2005: 21).

<sup>12</sup> As with younger students, the outcomes for adults undertaking mixed-field certificates are much worse. The completion rate for those undertaking a certificate I is around 17-16%, while around 32-30% of those undertaking a certificate II will complete. However, mixed field non-completers have the lowest subject pass rate.

students are good. Overall though, the employment outcomes for those who already have a certificate III or above from undertaking lower level qualifications are very poor (Karmel and Nguyen 2006). It is likely that many of these students are required to participate in lower level VET qualifications as part of 'welfare to work' policies. Arguably, it may be that rather than contributing to long-term employment and providing pathways to higher level studies, these programs are instead contributing to 'churn' in low-skilled, short-term and insecure employment, without providing the basis for further study (Barnett and Spoehr 2008).

These outcomes are sobering. Certificates I and II are meant to provide pathways to work and further study, particularly for disadvantaged students who require foundational knowledge to make these transitions. They do neither effectively. To reiterate: these are the qualifications where students from equity groups are overly concentrated. The decline in further study outcomes is also sobering. It is difficult to see how government targets for educational participation and achievement can be reached without measures to encourage pathways within VET. It is also difficult to see how pathways can support social inclusion with outcomes such as these.

## **Implications for equity policy**

The implications of the above analysis are that we need a tertiary education equity policy and not just VET and higher education equity policies. Just as the government's targets for educational participation and achievement cannot be considered separately by each sector, nor can equity policy be considered independently. More nuanced and coherent tertiary education equity policies are needed that focus on educational progression for students from disadvantaged backgrounds from lower level VET qualifications to higher level qualifications, particularly *to* diplomas and *from* diplomas to degrees. Consequently, this is an issue for higher education as much as it is for VET. Just as universities are expected to work with schools to raise students' aspirations for study in higher education, they will also need to work with TAFE and other VET providers in the same way.

We need consistent tertiary education policy with consistent definitions of equity groups in VET and higher education, even though the sectors will have different targets. There is a need for further differentiation of equity targets *within* VET to focus on pathways to higher level VET for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Low SES students need to be designated as an equity group in VET so that policy attention can be focused on their progression to higher level VET qualifications.

The Australian and state governments need advice if they are to develop coherent tertiary education equity strategies, yet existing arrangements are sectorally based. So too is equity research in Australia which is mostly differentiated by sector and this does not provide us with the insights we need to support students' transitions between sectors. Moreover, the emphasis in much VET equity research is on retention and successful completion of qualifications and not on transition to higher level VET qualifications or to higher education qualifications.

The nature of curriculum in VET qualifications is also an equity issue. They need to emphasise educational progression as well as occupational outcomes and provide



students with the knowledge and skills they need to study at a higher level. This is essential if we are to increase student traffic on pathways, achieve government participation targets, and contribute to equity objectives. In particular, this analysis suggests that certificates I and II do not meet their intended purposes and that they need to be rethought and redesigned in a process involving stakeholders from welfare departments and organisations so that welfare to work policies do not subvert VET qualifications by focusing on ‘work-first’ – any work regardless of how short-term and contingent it is. Rather, these VET qualifications should be about foundational skills and pathways.

## **Conclusion**

Access to education is important not just because of its contribution to the labour market, it is also important because it contributes to social inclusion. Of course, the two are related because a socially inclusive society makes better use of the talents and capacities of its citizens, but social inclusion is more than this. A socially inclusive society helps to develop social capital and communities that are tolerant, inclusive, and resilient and able to accommodate change. It provides fair opportunities for all to develop their potential and supports those who are disadvantaged to gain their share of these opportunities. So, an educational system must be judged by the opportunities it provides for its citizens, how these opportunities are distributed and the way they support social mobility. An educational system must also be judged by the extent to which it engages its citizens in learning, particularly the most socially disadvantaged, so they can take advantage of these opportunities.

The sectors cannot improve the outcomes for students from disadvantaged groups unless they work together. This is a new way of thinking about the relationship between VET and higher education – higher education is, in some ways, dependent on VET and on schools because it needs pathways from both to achieve its own targets. In considering lifelong learning, the Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) (1998: 10) explains that:

The issue is not simply co-ordination across sectors, institutions and programs and greater recognition of the value of different forms of learning, but unified and coherent policies which treat the first years of tertiary education as one element in a much longer cycle, stretching back to schooling and forward to advanced study and continuing education over the life cycle. As yet, policy development has not proceeded as far as it needs to in these directions.

This also applies to equally to equity policy, which is, arguably, a key pillar of lifelong learning – we just have to work out how to develop consistent tertiary education policies and frameworks to support these outcomes.

## **Notes on Table 1: Participation rate of equity groups in HE in 2007 & VET in 2008 & proportion in general population**

\* The higher education participation rates and proportion in general population are from Bradley (2008: 28, Table 4), whereas the 2008 participation rates in VET are from NCVET (2008: Table 3)

^ The non-English speaking background category in higher education is defined as having arrived in Australia within the last 10 years from a non-English speaking country, while VET defines this as speaking a language other than English at home. The ABS (2008: 456) reports that 15.6% of people spoke a language other than English at home in 2006.

^^ The Bradley (2008: 28) report, in discussing higher education, says this category 'Excludes profound and severe core activity limitation', whereas NCVET (2008: Table 3) includes impairment or long-term condition in this category. The ABS (2008: 341) says that 20% of the population reported a disability in 2003, and 6% 'had a profound or severe core activity limitation (sometimes or always needing assistance with self-care, mobility or communication)'. The ABS here includes the whole population, and not the usual reference range of 15 – 64 years that is usual for data on education and work.

# The NCVET reports on inner regional and outer regional, and remote and very remote. The inner and outer regional were combined to make one category and the remote and very remote were combined to make another category.

## **Notes on Table 2: Share of qualification level by VET equity group in 2008**

**Source:** NCVET (2009: Table 5)

\* There are no data for SES in VET by each qualification level since 2001. Source: Foley (2007: 27, Table 3)

\*\* This includes 'outer regional, remote and very remote', but it does not include inner regional. The 'outer regional, remote and very remote' group is 19.4% of all VET students derived from NCVET (2009: Table 3).

## **Notes on Table 3: Employment & further study outcomes for government funded TAFE graduates 2003 – 2009 # ^**

Source: NCVET (2009: Table 2)

^ This table is restricted to reporting on government funded TAFE graduates, and not all VET that is reported (which includes all provider types and funding sources) because these data are only available from 2005 – 2009. In 2005, 31.6% of all VET graduates went on to further study compared to 35.1% for TAFE graduates, and in 2008 and 2009 the percentage of TAFE graduates going on to further study was around 2.6% and 3.3% higher in each year respectively than for all VET graduates (NCVET 2009: Table 2).

# There is a certain amount of 'elasticity' in the percentages reported here due to sampling variability. This is minimal for the outcomes reported for all graduates, and for graduates who were seeking an employment related outcome. The outcomes are within 95% confidence interval levels (unless otherwise stated). See DEEWR (2009: 227) that explains the sampling variability and how it is calculated, and DEEWR (2009: 237 Table A2.8) that explains the possible variation for each reported percentage for government funded TAFE graduates from 2004 – 2008.

## **Notes on Table 4: Employment & further study outcomes for government funded TAFE graduates 2003 – 2008 aged between 15 – 19 years**

Source: 2001-2002 DEST (2006: Table A2.6); 2003 – 2007 DEEWR (2008: Table A2.12); 2008 DEEWR (2009: A21.2)

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**Author/s:**

Wheelahan, Leesa

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