

# CHAPTER



## EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

# B

### CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN

Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training.

- 1: *Ensure equal access to education.*
- 2: *Eradicate illiteracy among women.*
- 3: *Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education.*
- 4: *Develop non-discriminatory education and training.*
- 5: *Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms.*
- 6: *Promote life-long education and training for girls and women.*

## OVERVIEW

Access to education and training is vital for women. Education remains the key to improving economic status in a changing economy and equipping individuals to achieve their goals and widen their life choices. A well functioning economy needs a workforce that fully utilises all its human capital, and promotes skills development and education without discrimination on the grounds of sex.

In recent times, Australian governments have introduced initiatives to increase women's participation in education and training. Under the aegis of the national *Gender Equity Framework* for schools, the *National Strategy for Vocational Education and*

*Training and A Fair Chance for All*, governments have acted to improve access to education and training for women. Initiatives have been implemented to expand the range of options for women and girls, particularly their access to private schools, apprenticeships and traineeships.

Educational opportunities and outcomes have continued to grow strongly for women since the mid-1990s. More young women than men undertake the senior years of secondary schooling (77.9% for girls, compared to 65.9% for boys). Women have made up more than half of all higher education students in Australia since 1987, and the proportion of female students has increased steadily since that time. The proportion of women entering higher education increased from 56.5% in 1995 to 56.9% in 1998. In vocational education and training (VET), women have almost reached parity with men (rising from 47.2% in 1995 to 48.5% in 1998). Dramatic improvements have occurred in the area of employment based training, with the proportion of women entering apprenticeships and traineeships increasing from around 25% in 1995 to more than 40% in 1998.

Women have also made significant inroads into several traditional male areas of study, such as science, engineering and medicine. More

women and girls today are studying science, mathematics and technology-based subjects than ever before. In 1998, women entering medical undergraduate courses outnumbered men for the first time.

Since 1997, the Australian Government has funded a wide range of research aimed at enhancing women's participation in education, training and employment. Projects have included: the identification of barriers to education, training and employment for girls and boys and the factors that affect their post-school outcomes; and women's access to information technologies in education, training and employment.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

*1: Ensure equal access to education.*

### SCHOOL EDUCATION

More young women than men continue on to the senior years of secondary schooling in Australia. In 1998, the female year 12 retention rate was 77.7%, compared with 65.9% for males.

*Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*, sets out principles for action and strategic directions for education systems to move towards in order to achieve the best outcomes and opportunities for girls and boys. Specific outcomes are provided for

each strategic direction, together with a range of approaches and strategies. Strategic areas include school curriculum, culture and management practices to better address different educational needs of disparate groups of girls and boys.

The *Schools Work Towards Gender Equity* project was funded in the 1996-97 Budget to develop resource materials to assist principals and school staff to investigate their schools' gender equity needs and determine action that can be taken to bring about gender equity reform. The project provides a practical and informative resource to assist schools to address the strategic directions of the *Gender Equity Framework* (see above). The report is available on the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs' website ([www.detya.gov.au/schools/publications/genderequity/index.htm](http://www.detya.gov.au/schools/publications/genderequity/index.htm)).

In line with the Australian Government's commitment to provide all students with access to a quality education and increase parental choice in schooling, the Australian Government announced new funding arrangements to come into operation in 2001 for non-government schools. The new arrangements will be based on a measure of the socio-economic status of school communities, derived from current census data on family and household income, education and occupation. The new system will give

families, particularly low income families, greater access to the schooling of their choice, greater investment in education and provide more support for the neediest schools.

The Australian Government provides \$17.7 million annually, under the *Country Areas Programme*, to help schools and students in geographically isolated areas of Australia. This measure assists parents, administrators and other interested community members to improve the delivery of education services to primary and secondary students living in rural and remote areas.

The *Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme* (approximately \$38 million per year 2000-01 to 2003-04) helps families in rural and remote areas to overcome barriers to education and meet the extra costs associated with the schooling of their children. The aim of the Scheme is to help the families of students who are unable to attend a school daily because of geographic isolation. A range of allowances are available for students who board away from home, for families to set up a second home and for students who study at home by distance education methods.

#### **FAMILY AND LIFE EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS**

The health and physical education statement and profile for Australian schools also makes specific provision

for learning activities that promote the development of strategies for forming, maintaining and ending relationships and managing changes in roles and responsibilities.

The Australian Government funded the development of a set of curriculum units in family studies. The units examine the gender distribution of the various roles within families, the historical development of family patterns and structures, and the relationship between family structures and participation in economic, political and social life.

The *National Women's Health Programme* provided funding for the development of a special curriculum module and training manual for teachers to assist them in combating the undermining effects of sex role stereotypes on girls (eg. through self esteem and confidence-building), in dealing with menstruation and related issues, and in teaching human relationship and communication skills.

The Australian Government provides direct funding through the *Family Planning Programme* to selected non-government organisations for a range of activities, including education, counselling and clinical services, as well as nationally accredited training for health professionals. Education programmes are conducted by Family Planning Organisations in primary and secondary schools. These programmes cover issues such as

relationships, sexuality, responsible sexual behaviour, health risks and related topics.

## CIVIC EDUCATION

*Discovering Democracy* (\$18 million 1996-2000) is the Australian Government's *Civics and Citizenship Education Programme*. This initiative is designed to help all Australian students develop the basic knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to engage effectively in civic life. These materials promote women's participation in public life and provide role models of women in political and other non-traditional careers.

## RESEARCH

The Australian Government has commissioned research to examine the factors influencing the educational performance of both males and females in school and their initial destinations after leaving school.

## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

See below under Strategic Objective 3.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

In 1998, women made up 55.5% of the total higher education population in Australia. Female commencements in higher education have increased by 39% over the last ten years, whereas male commencements increased by

only 28.4% during the same period. Female postgraduate students rose from 49.9% in 1997 to 50.4% in 1998.

Mature-age women outnumber mature-age men in higher education. In 1998, 40.2% of higher education students were aged 25 years or older and 53% of these students were women. Mature-age women include women returning to study after a break, women with children, sole parents returning to the workforce and women improving their skills. Many mature-age students are admitted through flexible entry provisions and choose to study on a part-time or external basis.

Universities are encouraged to address the under-representation of women in some areas at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels through the provision of *Higher Education Equity Programme* (HEEP) funding. Funding of \$5.64 million was made available to institutions in 1999-2000 to assist them in providing appropriate programmes for equity groups, such as people from low socio-economic status background, rural and isolated backgrounds and women in non-traditional areas of study or in higher degree courses. HEEP funding is intended to be seed funding and not intended to cover the full costs of equity initiatives.

Universities are required to submit annual equity plans to demonstrate the extent to which equity planning and practice are integrated into their

operations. These equity plans describe strategies developed to increase the participation of equity groups in higher education. Some innovative strategies for women include:

- the provision of scholarships for women re-entering graduate study which recognise the discontinuous participation of women in higher education as a result of their family responsibilities;
- 'tracking' processes to monitor the progress of women studying in the fields of engineering, maths and computing;
- information forums for final year undergraduate women students to encourage them to pursue an academic career;
- encouragement of female staff, especially those involved in Information Technology, to lead faculty student recruitment activities; and
- promotion of curriculum review with gender inclusivity as a major aim.

The *Indigenous Support Funding Programme* is providing \$22.7 million in 1999 to higher education institutions to improve the access and participation of Indigenous men and women. The kinds of activities provided include study skills, personal counselling, provision of study centres, cultural

awareness activities and visits to schools to encourage Indigenous students to consider university courses. In 1998 there were 7,789 Indigenous students of whom 4,977 (or 64%) were Indigenous women.

Universities offer course units by distance mode through *Open Learning Australia*. The objectives of *Open Learning Australia* are to provide flexible access to tertiary education. An increasing number of courses are available through this mode of delivery, including undergraduate subjects, graduate programmes and some VET units.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR STUDENTS

The Australian Government provides financial assistance to students to assist in overcoming financial barriers to education, particularly for students from low income households.

Many full-time students aged 16 or over receive financial assistance through *Youth Allowance*, AUSTUDY or ABSTUDY.

- *Youth Allowance* is available to people aged 16-24 years who are undertaking education or training and includes rent assistance, a pharmaceutical allowance and a Remote Area Allowance. *Youth Allowance* has resulted in young unemployed people returning to

school or vocational training institutes. This is of particular benefit to rural communities.

- *AUSTUDY* is paid to students aged 25 years or over whose financial circumstances are such that without financial help, full-time study would not be possible. A total of \$297.7 million is being provided for *AUSTUDY* in 1999-2000.
- *ABSTUDY* is available for Indigenous Australians, regardless of age.

Women make up more than half of the recipients of *Youth Allowance* and *ABSTUDY* and around 42% of *AUSTUDY* clients.

Most tertiary students are required to pay the *Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS)* charge for their university studies. The HECS charge can be paid on enrolment or through a deferred payment arrangement commencing when the graduate's income reaches a certain level.

Post-graduate tertiary students may be eligible for an *Australian Postgraduate Award*. These awards provide an exemption from HECS, and those with stipend also provide benefits such as a living allowance.

### YOUNG WOMEN 'AT RISK'

A wide range of initiatives are under way to identify the barriers, and improve educational outcomes for

young people 'at risk' of not making a successful transition to further education or employment.

- Under the *Jobs Pathway Programme* (\$22 million in 2000-2001), school leavers not intending to go on to university are assisted to make a successful transition from school to work through partnerships involving schools, industry and the local community. The programme enables 'at risk' male and female students to gain access to a range of services, such as information and advice about VET options and brokerage assistance to gain employment placements, including *New Apprenticeships*. In 1998, around 25,000 young school leavers from over 1,500 schools across Australia, many of whom were women, were assisted under this initiative.

See also:

- The 'Returning to work' section for details on the *Job Placement, Employment and Training Programme* in *A: Women and Poverty*.

### EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

The Australian Government's national job creation strategy has created more opportunities for unemployed people to acquire the necessary skills and

training to compete effectively in the labour market. An active, properly targeted labour market programme will help those who are trapped in the unemployment spiral through lack of skills and other factors. It will also ensure that training for unemployed people is, wherever possible, accredited training that leads to more advanced qualifications and is relevant to local employment opportunities.

See also:

- *F: Women and the Economy* for details on *Job Network* and the *Return to Work Programme*.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

### 2: *Eradicate illiteracy among women.*

The 1996 *National School English Literacy Survey* found similar differences in literacy levels between girls and boys. The 1998 *Literacy and Numeracy Survey* found that more than three quarters of Year 3 and 5 girls met the literacy benchmarks for reading and writing compared to less than two thirds of boys. These and other studies show that there are a wide range of achievement levels between the lowest and highest achieving students, and that the difference between boys' and girls' levels of literacy is greater among children from unskilled and manual occupation backgrounds than among children from other socio-economic groups.

## LITERACY

In March 1997, Australian ministers for education agreed to a National Literacy and Numeracy Goal, *That every child leaving school should be numerate, and be able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level.* The Australian Government specifically supports the achievement of this goal through the *Literacy and Numeracy Programme* (almost \$869 million from 1999-2000 to 2002-2003). The programme aims to help schools measurably improve the literacy skills of students in the early and middle years of schooling.

The *Quality Teacher Programme* (\$77.1 million from 1999-2000 to 2002-2003) aims to strengthen the skills of the teaching profession. The programme focuses on the renewal of teacher skills and understanding across key learning areas, including literacy and numeracy.

The *Workplace English Language and Literacy Programme* (WELL) is an \$11.8 million programme (1999-2000) that provides workers, including non-English speaking background and Indigenous women workers, with English language and literacy skills to enable them to meet the demands of their current and future employment and training needs. WELL projects assist the delivery of workplace-based English language and literacy training activities, the development of English language and literacy resources and support national strategic activities within particular industries, including

the incorporation of language, literacy, and numeracy competencies into industry training packages. In addition, the *Workplace Communication Project*, a component of the WELL programme, supports the integration of language and literacy competencies into training packages. The programme had 7,400 women clients in 1999, or approximately 37% of the total client numbers.

## ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TRAINING

Funding for the *English as a Second Language (ESL) General Support Programme* is now subsumed within the Government's *Literacy and Numeracy Programme*. This change recognises the central importance of literacy skills for every child. Within broad guidelines, school authorities have greater flexibility in administering and allocating funds according to local priorities and the needs of individual students within the target groups, including students from a non-English speaking background.

In addition to ESL funding under the *Literacy and Numeracy Programme*, the Australian Government provides substantial assistance for newly arrived non-English speaking students who are citizens or permanent residents to enable them to participate in intensive language tuition under the *English as a Second Language - New Arrivals Programme*. A similar programme has

also been introduced for students whose first language is an Indigenous one. The programme received funds of \$36 million in 1999-2000 and 47.7% of programme participants in 1999 were women.

The *Adult Migrant English Programme* provides English language tuition to newly arrived adult migrants. Child care is available if required. The proportion of women participants in the programme was 62% in 1999.

The *Advanced English for Migrants Programme* (\$5.34 million in 1999) helps migrant job seekers obtain employment and overcome individual barriers to participation in vocational education and training. Courses provide advanced English language tuition and generally have a vocational focus, covering a wide range of skilled occupations.

Further assistance is available for young job seekers from non-English speaking backgrounds as part of the enhanced mutual obligations arrangements. Participation in the *Literacy and Numeracy Programme* will be one of the options available to eligible young people aged 18-24 years after having been in receipt of unemployment payments for six months. The Australian Government has allocated up to 25 per cent of literacy and numeracy training places nationally to job seekers of non-English speaking backgrounds.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

*3: Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education.*

Women in non-traditional areas of education and training are a focus of government policy. Some of the key priority areas are engineering, computer science and post-graduate research. The Australian Government recognises the importance of women developing appropriate skills in new technologies to ensure that there are no gender-based disadvantages, particularly in accessing services and employment.

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

In Years 11 and 12, an equal number of girls and boys now enrol in mathematics and chemistry. However, fewer girls enrol in the physical sciences and computing. In VET and higher education, women continue to be under-represented in engineering, architecture and computer science.

Effort has been invested in encouraging girls and women to enter science and technology areas of study. These efforts include the development of curriculum materials, including *Gender Work*, an education kit addressing issues of gender and work.

The Australian Government has also

established a 'Women and Information Technology Advisory Group for Online Australia' to develop projects to encourage better access for women to new technologies.

The *Science and Technology Awareness Programme* supports activities to increase women's awareness and promote education and careers in science and technology. Projects include a trial of a Best Practice Model for encouraging and supporting women interested in science and technology and engineering courses in the vocational education and training sector. Talks by scientists and others are available to rural women to educate and inspire women about the fundamental role of science in our daily lives and future prosperity.

*See also:*

- *J: Women and the Media* for details on *Online Australia*.

## VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET)

Australia's *National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 1998-2000* identifies objectives for the national VET system, which include achieving equitable outcomes for all students. The strategy supports the *National Women's VET Strategy* that sets the national direction for governments, industry and training

providers to consistently address the needs of women in policy making, planning, resourcing, implementing and monitoring VET. Increasing the number of women completing VET programmes across all levels and fields of study is a key objective of the Strategy.

Women's participation in VET has increased steadily since the mid-1990s. In 1998, women made up almost half of all VET students and more than 40% of commencing *New Apprenticeships*.

#### **SCHOOL TO WORK PROGRAMME**

Under the *School to Work Programme*, the Australian Government is providing significant funding to support VET in schools, with a total of \$23 million over four financial years, ending in June 2000. Initiatives include professional development for teachers, the delivery of VET courses in schools by industry and trainers and piloting part-time *New Apprenticeships* in schools where students are able to combine their senior secondary studies with accredited vocational training and paid employment.

#### **AUSTRALIAN STUDENT TRAINEESHIP FOUNDATION**

The *Australian Student Traineeship Foundation* (\$83.3 million from 2000-2001 to 2003-2004) works closely with industry to support sustainable

school to work transitions for all young men and women. An important aim of the initiative is to increase the participation of school students in VET.

#### **FLEXIBLE DELIVERY**

The Australian Government has played a leading role in promoting lifelong learning and flexible delivery mechanisms, including distance education. These measures contribute to improving women's access to VET. In 1998, women comprised more than 55% of distance students.

VET courses in Australia are increasingly delivered in many varied locations, in a variety of modes, such as through on-line courses, and have a greater number of entry and exit points. The flexible delivery of training is very important for women, particularly those with family responsibilities, who often require access to training at times and locations more suited to their specific needs.

National Training Packages provide the basis for consistency in training and qualification outcomes and form the foundation of vocational training. They are designed to support a range of learning and career pathways and flexible combinations of on- and off-the-job training and assessment to meet particular enterprise, regional and individual training needs. All

training packages include guidelines for the assessment and Recognition of Prior Learning which enables training organisations and employers to identify and formally recognise the skills that women gain outside formal training.

### **NEW APPRENTICESHIPS**

The Australian Government's *New Apprenticeship* reforms, involving a new national system of apprenticeships and traineeships, offer greater flexibility and new arrangements that will improve and expand training opportunities for women. These include:

- the extension of *New Apprenticeships* into new industries, including those with large numbers of female workers;
- the commissioning of research to investigate women's participation in *New Apprenticeships* and to develop strategies to increase their access and retention;
- expanding the provision of part-time *New Apprenticeships* including in traditional male industries and emerging industries;
- a publication of an educational resource to promote young women's participation in *New Apprenticeships*; and

- the availability of employer incentive payments for certain categories of existing workers to take up a *New Apprenticeship*. This provides more opportunities for existing women workers to undertake a *New Apprenticeship*. Certain categories of existing workers, for example, can now attract an employer incentive payment.

The results are already beginning to show in improved participation rates for women – the total number of female new apprentices rose from 32,555 in 1996 to 57,000 in 1998 – an increase of 75%.

A number of other measures are funded by the Australian Government to increase opportunities for women to undertake *New Apprenticeships*:

- additional incentive payments (\$1000) are paid to employers for taking on a female apprentice or trainee in a non-traditional occupation; and
- the *New Apprenticeships Access Programme* (\$25.2 million in 1999-2000) provides pre-apprenticeship and pre-traineeship assistance for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market and require preliminary training before they can successfully participate in a *New Apprenticeship*. Women who are registered as unemployed or receiving income support and wish

to enter a non-traditional 'female' occupation are eligible for assistance under this programme. Approximately one third of participants are women.

### **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION DIRECT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME**

The *Indigenous Education Direct Assistance Programme* provides career guidance, support and tuition for students and trainees in need of additional assistance. This initiative has helped many Indigenous women gain entry into VET courses.

See also:

- Strategic Objective 1 above for details on the *Jobs Pathway Programme*.

### **SMALL BUSINESS TRAINING**

In 1999-2000, the Australian Government will implement new programmes (\$800,000 per annum) to assist women in small business through measures to improve the flow of information on business issues to women and provide opportunities to enhance their management skills and networks. For more details, see the *Small Business Enterprise and Culture Programme in F: Women and the Economy*.

The *Small Business Professional Development Best Practice Programme* is an action research programme designed to develop, trial and implement a range of models to meet the training needs of small business and to stimulate the demand for quality training. Several projects target small business women, or industries where there are large numbers of women workers, to increase women's participation in training and help them expand their business operations. The *Women in Small Business Mentoring Project*, for example, developed a mentoring network linking new starters with experienced business owners to share knowledge and experience and boost confidence and success. The network placed a strong emphasis on improving skills and participation in on-the-job training with general business support and information.

Women's small business training and skill development is also being addressed through nationally recognised training materials and self-paced training programmes. Information on the training products will be disseminated through on-line technology, seminars and printed material.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

4: *Develop non-discriminatory education and training.*

### GENDER EQUITY AWARENESS

During 1998, the Australian Government allocated funding of \$100,000 to produce an annotated bibliography listing resources to combat violence in schools. This guide will help school communities to plan strategies and develop training programmes for teachers and parents. It will be distributed to all Australian schools and is available at [www.detya.gov.au/schools/publications/genderequity](http://www.detya.gov.au/schools/publications/genderequity) on the Internet.

### LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Australia has a robust legislative framework to ensure that women and particular groups of women (such as Indigenous women and women with a disability) are not discriminated against in education and training.

*See also:*

- *H: Institutional Mechanisms for the advancement of Women* for details on the *Race Discrimination Act (1975)*, the *Sex Discrimination Act (1984)* and the *Discrimination Act 1992*.
- *Strategic objective 1* above for details on initiatives to improve women's access to education and training.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

5: *Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms.*

Robust monitoring and reporting of education and training programmes and outcomes for students, including those for particular equity groups including women, is a well-established feature of Australia's education and training systems. Quantitative data on female students in schools, VET (including *New Apprenticeships*) and universities is published on an annual basis.

The Australian Government has allocated substantial resources to monitor the impact of reforms on women. For example, the development and implementation of *New Apprenticeships* has been regularly monitored to ensure that equity groups, including women, are able to benefit from the reforms.

Evaluation and monitoring procedures have also been significantly enhanced since 1995. Under the *National Women's VET Strategy*, new performance indicators were introduced for women in VET. A comprehensive report was published in 1997 on key VET outcomes for women across a wide range of indicators and covering disadvantaged groups of women including Indigenous women, NESB women, women with disabilities and rural women.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

### *6. Promote life-long education and training.*

Australian governments strongly support increasing opportunities for lifelong education and training. The flexible delivery of training and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) are especially important for women.

### FLEXIBLE DELIVERY

The flexible delivery of education and training expands opportunities for women of all ages to participate in education and training. Education and training courses in Australia are increasingly delivered in many varied locations, in a variety of modes (eg. on-line courses) and have a greater number of entry and exit points. Many women, particularly those with family responsibilities often require access to courses at times and locations more suited to their specific needs.

### RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

The increased availability of the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is also particularly beneficial for many women. The availability of RPL enables women to gain credit for the skills and knowledge acquired through life experiences (eg. through their voluntary community work and

household duties) and assists many women to move into further training after a career break. RPL is a key priority for all Australian governments and has been supported by a wide range of initiatives. These include the establishment of skills recognition centres, research, and the publication and dissemination of information and practical resources to employers, training providers and individuals. RPL is a priority area in the National Women's VET Strategy and funds have been provided for several implementation projects.

*See also:*

- Strategic Objective 3 above under 'Vocational Education and Training'.

### WOMEN IN VET

The national VET system aims to meet the needs of the existing workforce so that workers can upgrade their existing skills or obtain new skills. It also aims to improve pathways to VET for new entrants to workforce and those returning to the workforce. In 1998, students aged over 25 years comprised 61% of the total student population in the VET sector, 51.2% of whom were women.

*See also:*

- The Workplace English Language and Literacy Programme under Strategic Objective 1 above.

## WOMEN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

National policies for education and training give priority to students from particular equity groups, including students with a disability, students from geographically isolated regions and students from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. Key policies include the *National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 1998-2000*, the *National Women's VET Strategy and A Fair Chance for All*.

The *National Women's VET Strategy*, for example, sets the national direction for governments, industry and training providers to consistently address the needs of women in policy making, planning, resourcing, implementing and monitoring VET. The Strategy targets particular groups of women including women from different racial and cultural backgrounds, rural and remote women, women with a disability and women returning to paid work after a period of absence.

## RURAL WOMEN

A range of Australian Government initiatives are being implemented that will improve rural girls' and women's access, participation and outcomes.

The Education Network Australia (EdNA) is a national framework established to coordinate the use of interactive computer networks across the educational sectors. A key

objective is to improve access to information technology by all Australians, regardless of geographic location. EdNA provides information about education and training opportunities, and also facilitates the flexible delivery of courses. Women living in rural areas will benefit from the service delivered through EdNA. The EdNA Directory Service can be found at <http://www.edna.edu.au>. The Australian Government's support for EdNA is provided through the *Framework for Open Learning Programme*, a \$22.5 million programme in 1999-2000.

The *Rural Youth Information Service* (\$750,000 in 1999-2000) provides young men and women aged 15 to 25 years in rural and remote communities with access to information, advice and referral to other agencies on education, training and employment matters including income support. Brokers also provide assistance in negotiating placements with employers, including for *New Apprenticeships*.

The *Rural and Regional New Apprenticeships Incentive* is available to employers in non-metropolitan areas who employ a *New Apprentice* in an occupation identified as being in skill shortage. The measure is expected to provide additional opportunities for rural women.

The Australian Government has provided \$250 million over five years to

*Networking the Nation* to assist the economic and social development of regional, rural and remote Australia. Rural women will be able to take advantage of improved communications and on-line training as a result of this initiative.

See also:

- Strategic Objective 1 above for details on the *Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme*, the *Country Areas Programme* and the *Higher Education Equity Programme*.

## INDIGENOUS WOMEN

While there have been improvements in the participation of Indigenous male and female students in education and training, outcomes are still well below those of other Australians. In general, however, women tend to have better outcomes than men. The Australian Government is undertaking concerted efforts to address barriers and ensure that Indigenous students achieve equitable and appropriate outcomes in education and training.

The *Education Strategic Initiatives Programme* (\$127.4 million in 1999-2000) and the *Education Direct Assistance Programme* (\$62.5 million in 1999-2000) aim to achieve equitable and appropriate outcomes for Indigenous men and women. Performance targets, which are negotiated with education departments and education providers, measure

outcomes for literacy, numeracy, school attendance, retention, grade progression, Tertiary Entrance Rank, awarding of school certificates and employment.

The *Indigenous Education Direct Assistance Programme* (IEDA) comprises three elements:

- *Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme* which provides tuition for Indigenous students and trainees who need extra assistance with their studies;
  - *Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Programme* which aims to break down barriers and establish a forum for productive dialogue between parents of Indigenous students and their educators; and
  - *Vocational Educational Guidance for Aboriginals Scheme* which provides seed funding in the key area of assisting Indigenous people to make decisions about education and career choices.
- Women make up approximately 50% of clients under IEDA.

Other Indigenous specific measures are:

- the *Indigenous Support Funding Programme* (\$22.7 million in 1999-2000) funds universities to support students. In 1998 there were 7,789 Indigenous students, of whom 64% were women;

- the *Indigenous Researchers Development Scheme* (\$220,000 in 2000). Just over half of the existing researchers funded under the Scheme are women; and
- the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training Advisory Council provides advice to the ANTA Board on ways to improve access and outcomes for Indigenous Australians in VET.

In addition, a wide range of mainstream programmes target Indigenous Australians including the *New Apprenticeships Access Programme* and the *Higher Education Equity Programme* (see Strategic Objective 1 above). In addition, a research project is examining ways to improve disadvantaged students' (including Indigenous students') access and outcomes in information technology courses.

*See also:*

- Strategic Objective 1 above for details on *ABSTUDY*.

### NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND WOMEN

There are several programmes to assist women from a non-English speaking background with English language skills. See above under *Strategic Objective 2 – Eradicating*

*illiteracy among women* for details concerning language programmes for those with English as a second language.

*See also*

- Strategic Objective 3 above.
- The *Mutual obligation* section in *F: Women and the Economy*.
- The 'Assistance to refugee women in Australia' section in *E: Women and Armed Conflict*.

### OLDER WOMEN

The Australian Government commissioned a research report entitled *Barriers to Training for Older Workers* as part of its response to the International Year of the Older Persons. The purpose of this report is to identify the barriers (including systemic, personal, family, employment and other barriers) facing workers aged 45 years and over and develop innovative and practical initiatives.

### WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

The Australian National Training Authority's (ANTA) Disability Forum is a national advisory committee that provides advice to the ANTA Board on the training needs of people with a disability, including women with a disability.

The Australian Government funds the *Disabled Apprenticeship Wage Support*

*Programme* which provides weekly wage support to employers for recruiting a person with a disability as an apprentice. Assistance may also be provided by way of necessary workplace modifications or the hire and leasing of special equipment, tutorial assistance or interpreter services. The programme had approximately 2,800 clients in 1998-1999, of whom 12% were women.

Students with disabilities are also target groups of Government-funded programmes and policies, including the *National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 1998-2000*, the *National Women's VET Strategy and A Fair Chance for All* (see above).

See also:

- Strategic Objective 3 above for details on small business training.
- Strategic Objective 1 above for details on the *New Apprenticeships Access Programme* and the *Higher Education Equity Programme*. People with a disability are targets under these programmes.

## INTERNATIONAL AID

Australia's aid programme policy on education and training recognises that education for women and girls is critical for poverty reduction. This policy was issued in August 1996 with five priority areas: basic education, vocational and technical education, higher education, institutional

strengthening and distance education. Around 64% of Australia's bilateral education programmes have girls as a significant focus.

Australia's aid programme assists women's education through non-formal literacy projects. Concerted efforts have been made to incorporate literacy programmes as part of broader community development or rural integrated development projects.

Australia is co-financing a Primary Education Enhancement Project in India with UNICEF in which innovative and community-based awareness strategies regarding girls' overall access to education are being implemented. These strategies include the release of girl siblings from child-care responsibilities and the development of transition schools for working children.

Australia has provided more than \$14 million to Papua New Guinea to support the development of elementary vernacular education. The project will assist in the development of curriculum, teaching materials, infrastructure and training for approximately 5,500 teachers to strengthen the country's capacity to provide quality education in the first three years of schooling. The project aims to recruit at least 50% of women teachers. It will provide regionally based training and village employment

to overcome the barriers of security and distance for women. In addition, the increasing numbers of women elementary teachers will provide girls with alternative female role models in paid employment.

## EXAMPLES OF STATE AND TERRITORY INITIATIVES

### NEW SOUTH WALES

In NSW the *TAFE State Programme of Action for Women* has increased women's access to TAFE. 55.9% of distance education students in TAFE in 1997 were women.

### VICTORIA

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring that education is accessible and affordable to all women. Specific strategies to meet the educational and training needs of older women, Koori women, rural women and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are being implemented by Government. The promotion of the participation of women in non traditional trades through the provision of information and facilitation of partnership projects and public education will also be undertaken.

The strategies include:

- lifelong learning initiatives for women promoted through ongoing support for the University of the Third Age;
- investigation of the needs of older learners to develop an older learners policy;
- professional development activities to better support Koori women in TAFE;
- building two Koori Training Centres to address the needs of local communities including the needs of Koori women; and
- a review of the current provision of gender education, and the development of policy advice and curriculum strategies to support schools to provide gender equity in education will be undertaken.

### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

The ACT has developed a strategy to implement *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*. The Strategy assists schools to develop annual action plans to analyse and address gender issues. Professional development and training for teachers promotes gender-sensitive education. Vocational education and work experience programmes include analysis of gender perspectives and non-traditional work patterns.

## QUEENSLAND

Queensland has been active in the implementation of both the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls* and since 1997, the *National Gender Equity Framework*. The national Framework indicates a range of priority areas for action and is linked to national reporting processes.

Professional development projects conducted in Queensland schools during 1995/96 include the *Racist and Gendered Violence Project* and a curriculum project called *Gender up Front*.

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

The *Making Waves* project for Indigenous women in broadcasting is aimed at training women to manage and operate programmes and equipment in remote communities.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The South Australian Government has introduced *Integrated Language and Workplace Trainer* which provides training for women of non-English speaking background employed in the textile industry.

## TASMANIA

Tasmanian data suggests that girls are outperforming boys in literacy outcomes. Whilst adult literacy programmes in Tasmania do not

specifically target women, in 1998 women made up approximately 47% of all participants in the Adult Literacy and Basic Education programme conducted by TAFE. Women-only literacy classes for women from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds have been delivered since 1992.

The Government's *Tasmanian Implementation Plan for Women* has been developed to implement the *National Women's VET Strategy*. The State Steering Committee is responsible for identifying key areas of need, including women in information technology, and assisting in the development and implementation of strategies.

Case management is being trialled for people from groups with special needs (including women) as they progress through vocational education and training.

The *East Coast Pilot Project Training Brokerage for Rural Women 1997/1998* was a pilot project to: assist women to access information about courses they were interested in; assist women with enrolment procedures; provide initial return to study sessions; and provide tutorial assistance as required by individuals. Following the project, there was a 57% increase in female enrolments in VET courses from the piloted municipality between 1996 and 1997. The pilot is continuing.

The Government funds women's access courses in all regions of the State. These courses assist women who have been out of the workforce for a significant time to return to study and/or employment. TAFE Tasmania, through its Women's Training Consultant, promotes women's access and participation in vocational education and training. The role of the consultant includes staff development in gender-inclusive training and other areas.

Approximately 75% of enrolments in adult education courses in Tasmania are women. Funding is also provided to Neighbourhood Houses, used predominantly by women, to deliver programmes that promote self-esteem and encourage women to participate in lifelong learning.

In 1996 funding was provided to TAFE Tasmania for the State-wide delivery of Certificate III in Information Technology in women-only classes. Women's interest in the course was very high and outcomes were excellent.

In Tasmania, gender equity, with a focus on the education of girls, was a priority for the three year period from 1995-1997. Significant extra resources were allocated to support the implementation of the Department's policy on gender equity. Seven district gender curriculum officers were employed with central coordination to improve educational practices in relation to gender.

## OBSTACLES AND LEARNING POINTS

### WOMEN'S CONCERNS IN THE COMMUNITY

Despite an increasing acceptance in the community of the right of women to have access to educational opportunities, there are concerns about the vulnerability of women with poor access to education, especially Indigenous women and migrant women. In addition, high course fees and child care costs can impede access to education by other women and women are likely to carry the burden of fees for longer due to lower pay and higher likelihood of absences from the workforce. Women in the community are also concerned that young women continue to follow more traditional female career paths and that there needs to be support for women pursuing non-traditional career choices.

### CHALLENGES

Gender differences in educational performance and attainment have significant implications for further education and employment outcomes later in life. While there have been dramatic improvements across many areas of education and training, girls and women are still concentrated in a narrow range of subject areas. Female

students are significantly under-represented in some science and technology fields (eg, engineering; some computer science courses) and are heavily concentrated in low skill level *New Apprenticeships* such as those in hairdressing and clerical.

As with all OECD countries, Australia continues to have a gender-segregated workforce, with most women concentrated in retail sales, service and clerical occupations. Further efforts are needed to encourage cultural changes in non-traditional workplaces and to build on best practice models to encourage girls to enter new technologies.

One of the key factors in improving equitable outcomes for women will be the expansion of structured, nationally recognised training opportunities into areas where high numbers of women are employed. Another important objective will be to encourage women to train for emerging areas of employment.

## LEARNING POINTS

Over the past decade, Australian governments have allocated substantial resources to increase women's participation in non-traditional fields of study. Many strategies have focused on promoting broader career options to young women in schools. Recent research has

suggested that greater efforts need to be directed towards improving the culture of non-traditional workplaces and education and training environments.

## FUTURE COMMITMENTS

Future commitments for women are incorporated above.

In the Australian Government system, new funding commitments are customarily announced in the annual Federal Budget. Additional commitments may be publicly announced in the context of the election platform or at other occasions.

The Australian Government's future budget commitments for women are comprehensively outlined in *Delivering on our Commitments for Women*, the Budget Ministerial Statement on Women from the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Status of Women. A copy of this Statement has been provided in response to Part 2 (Financial and Institutional measures).

