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on Measurement of the Quality of Employment
(Geneva, 3-5 May 2000)

Topic 4

MEASURING TRAINING IN AUSTRALIA

Supporting paper submitted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics

Summary

1. In the mid 1980s Australian industry became exposed to increasing international competition, with a resulting decrease in security of employment, particularly for workers without formal skills. The federal government became concerned at the lack of information about training in Australia, and approached the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), who undertook to develop specific proposals and methodologies to meet their need for data.
2. Government also responded by introducing the Training Guarantee Act 1990, which required all employers above a certain payroll threshold to spend a minimum percentage of payroll each financial year on eligible training. As the scheme also required employers to maintain certain records relating to this training, ABS was able to design questionnaires in the knowledge that the information sought would in fact be available.
3. Although the Training Guarantee Act was suspended in 1994, and abolished in 1996, the associated requirement that employers maintain a wide range of training information was of major benefit to the ABS, and one which continued for some years after the Act was suspended.

4. Training surveys conducted by the ABS include:

How Workers Get Their Training (1989) which was the first large scale comprehensive training survey of individuals undertaken by the ABS.

Training Expenditure Survey (1989, 1990, 1993, 1996), which measured the amount and types of formal training provided by employers, and the cost of such training.

Training Practices Survey (1994, 1997), which collected qualitative data, such as factors affecting amount and type of training, types of support for structured training, etc.

Commercial Training Providers (1994), which investigated private sector organisations conducting vocational training on a fee-for-service (commercial) basis.

Survey of Training and Education (1993), which was similar to *How Workers Get Their Training*, but with expanded scope and content.

Survey of Education and Training (1997), which again followed on from the 1989 and 1993 surveys, but with an increased emphasis on the education component.

5. Other training data stakeholders are the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), which collects national vocational education and training statistics from government funded training institutions, and the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), which works closely with government and industry in providing advice on national training policies and strategies.
6. Current key policy issues which require appropriate statistical attention include:
- an increased emphasis on the links between education, training and work;
 - a greater emphasis on lifelong learning, with people taking and being encouraged to take, different pathways at various times in their lives to upgrade their skills and qualifications;
 - the blurring of boundaries between the traditional sectors of schools, vocational education and training and higher education;
 - the changing arrangements and practices for the delivery of services to clients within the training sector;
 - the increasing emergence of the private sector as a provider of training; and
 - a growing interest in the measurement of outcomes and performance.
7. In response to these needs, the ABS has moved to include a regular survey of education and training (SET) in its ongoing statistical program. The survey will next run in 2001, and include questions on all the major issues covered last time.

