

VET in crisis

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Argument

- The Australian VET system is in crisis & competency-based training is at the heart of the crisis as it is the foundation VET in Australia. CBT underpins a low-trust, highly regulated system, a market that is rocked by corruption & scandals, & a fragmented system of qualifications

The current social settlement is broken

- The current social settlement between VET and society is not working and VET is in crisis
- We need to rethink our model of vocational education
- We need a national public review of the VET system, & not just elements of it

Overview

- What is the nature of the social settlement?
- How did we get here?
- The links between vocational education and the labour market in shaping (shaky) transitions
- Qualifications, capabilities, vocations & vocational streams
- The role of TAFE as anchor institutions in communities

What is a social settlement in VET?

- Governments focus on the productive capacity of society
- Individuals focus on preparation for their working life and progression in the labour market
- Employers focus on the immediate needs of their firms
- These interests are not identical & the social settlement is a compromise

The compromise in VET

- Was based on privileging the interests of employers' immediate concerns
- Problems in VET attributed to TAFE – blamed for skills mismatches & poor labour market outcomes

How did we get here?

- Policy objectives in 1980s & 1990s
 - Align training with Australia's economic policy objectives – through CBT – workplace tasks & roles
 - Establish a national VET system with nationally recognised & portable qualifications based on CBT
 - Develop a training market that includes private as well as public providers

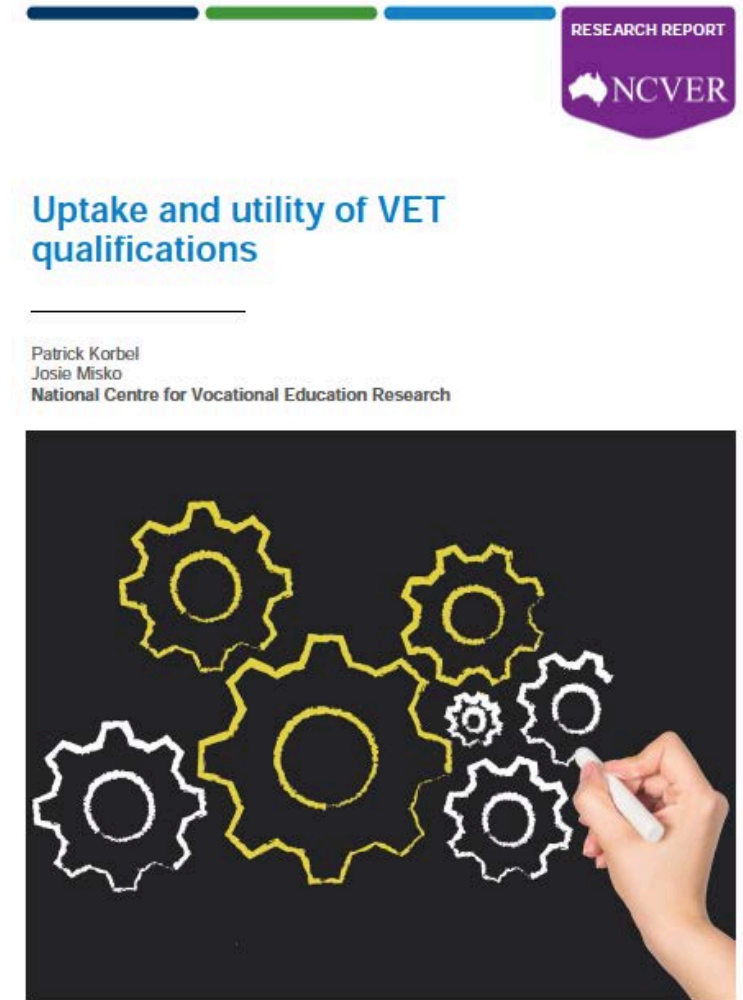
How have things gone?

Employment outcomes

- Most VET graduates don't work in occupation associated with their qualification
- 33% of VET graduates in 2016 were in jobs associated with their qualification
- 13.2% for clerical & administrative workers; 18.6% for professionals; 43% for clerical & personal services workers
- 72% for apprentices in a trade occupation, but only 38% for those in a non-trade occupation – apprenticeships don't solve the VET/occupation connection

Thousands of qualifications that aren't used

- “Currently, only a small proportion of publicly funded qualifications have the majority of enrolments, with a significant proportion of qualifications having very few, or no publicly funded enrolments. For example, of the 3909 qualifications publically delivered from 2002 to 2013, 395 (10 per cent) had less than 10 enrolments and 894 (23 per cent) had less than 50 enrolments over that period.”



Thousands of providers teaching very few students

Figure 1 Percentage of training providers, by size according to number of students, 2015 (%)

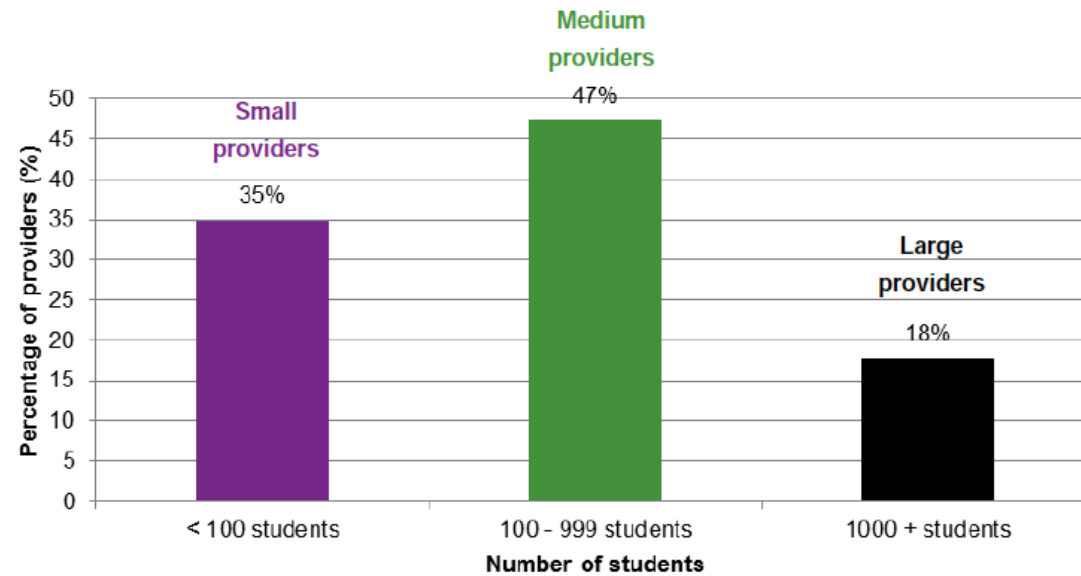
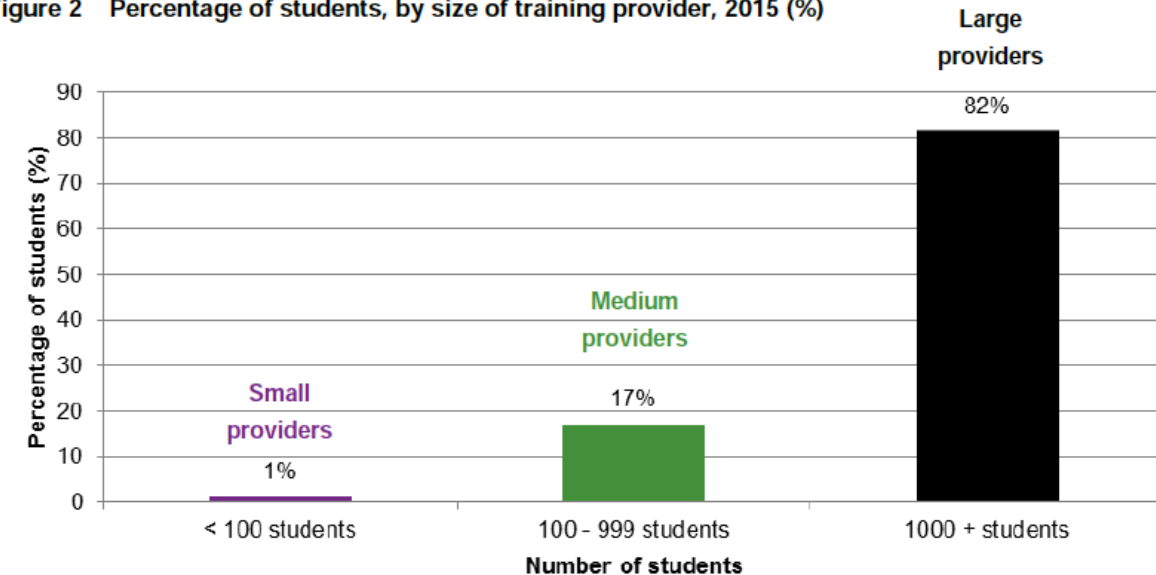


Figure 2 Percentage of students, by size of training provider, 2015 (%)



Source: National VET Provider Collection, 2015.

CBT qualifications

- Based on behaviourist assumptions that it is possible to break down tasks into its components, including elements, performance criteria & other components
- Fragments work, knowledge & skill
- Provides students only with access to contextually specific applications of knowledge
- Leads to emphasis on procedural knowledge & the supervised worker

Undermines the development of occupational practice

- This results in: “[a] rigid backward mapping approach, in which the state of the art on the shop floor is the untouchable starting point for the definition of occupational competencies, leading to routinised job descriptions, in which the proactive and reflective worker is left out”. (Biemans et al. cited in Brockmann, Clarke *et al.* 2008: 237)

How CBT facilitates markets

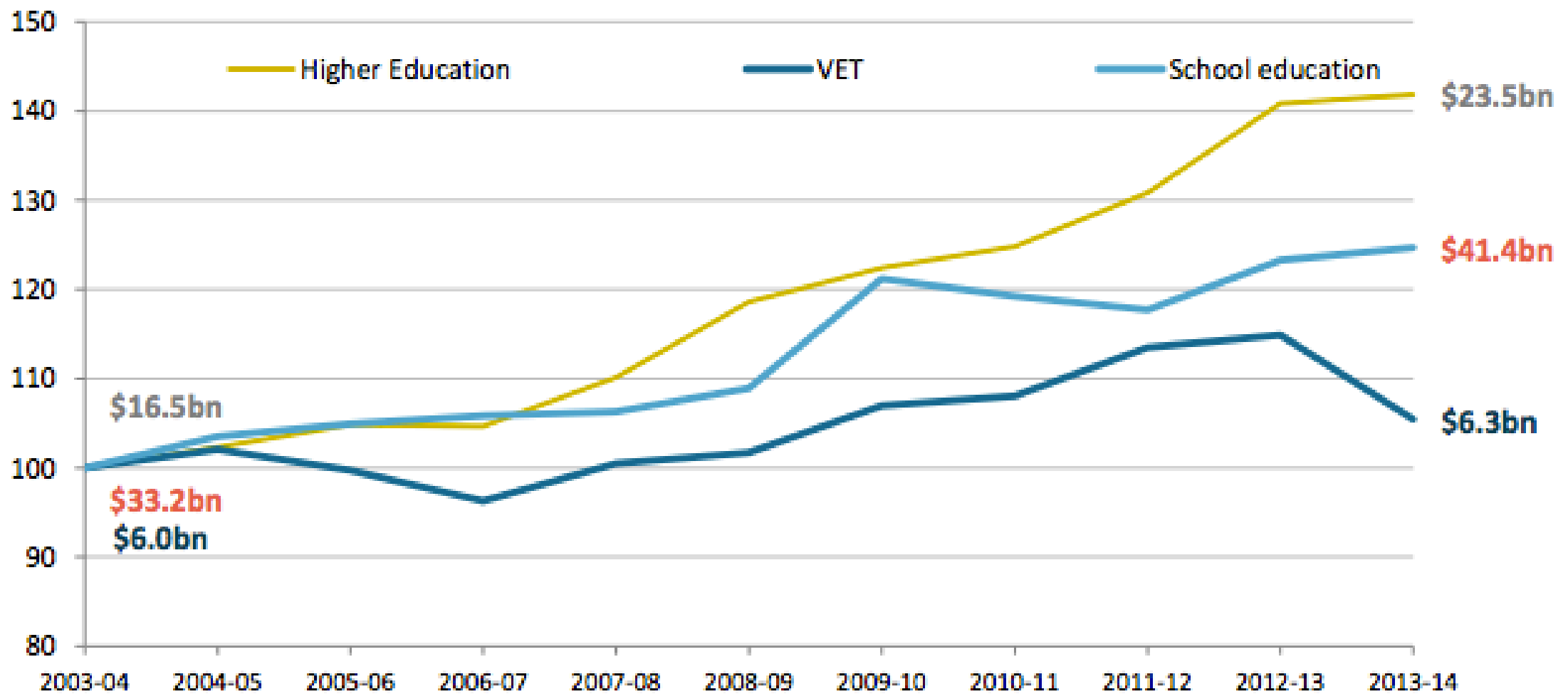
- Point of policy was to create a market based on CBT – training packages, with competencies the currency
- Off the shelf products
- Buy this, not that competency or skill set
- Institutions don't have to invest
- Low-quality qualifications in a market where arguably it is too easy for providers to gain accreditation

Government real recurrent expenditure per annual hour (2014 dollars)

	2005	2014	% change
NSW	15.16	12.76	-15.9
Victoria	15.18	7.80	-48.6
QLD	18.88	13.55	-28.2
West Aus	18.60	15.08	-18.9
South Aus	18.36	13.98	-23.8
Australia	16.64	11.40	-31.5

Figure 6: Expenditure by education sector 2003-04/2013-14.

Peter Noonan's report on VET \$



ACIL Allen Consulting analysis based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data

Decimation of TAFE

Shares of publicly funded EFT students

	TAFE			Private providers		
	2009	2014	2015	2009	2014	2015
Victoria	77.6	36.6	35.8	12.3	56.5	56.7
South Aus	71.4	47.2	53.7	26.8	51.8	45.3
NSW	88.5	84.5	82.7	8.1	12.6	14.6
QLD	75.8	44.1	30	23.7	54.5	69
West Aus	83.7	75.6	71	14.7	23.2	27.5
Australia	81.2	56	50.3	14.6	40.2	45.7

TAFE staff numbers in decline along with funding
TAFE numbers down Victorian TAFE system 'in the red'

Posted 30 May 2014, 2:36pm

WA Government rejects claim higher fees deterring TAFE students

TAFE funding plunges, financial watchdog report shows

It's buyer beware in private fee-for-all

[crisis as pressure mounts | The Australian](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/vet-in-crisis-as-pressure-mounts/story-e6frgcko-1226801701664)
australian.com.au/.../vet-in-crisis.../story-e6frgcko-1226801701664

Skills reform a "shemozzle", says ex-TAFE chief

[PPP virus spreads through VET system | The Australian](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/ppp-virus-spreads-through-vet-system/story-e6frqcix-122613284)
www.theaustralian.com.au/higher...vet.../story-e6frqcix-122613284

[T complexity 'worse under market' | The Australian](http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/t-complexity-worse-under-market/story-e6frgcjx-1227001190)
www.theaustralian.com.au/higher.../vet.../story-e6frgcjx-1227001190

Victorian cuts 'immoral': TAFE chiefs - The Australian

VET panel chief John Hart denies being refused registration

Students are gaining worthless certificates through dodgy courses,

[College claims to belong to international agency it owns](#)

Four-day diplomas for the workers, Bali trip for the boss

TAFE scandals inevitable in race to bottom

Enrolments in diplomas crash in Victoria



Regulator 'flying blind' in widely-rorted vocational education loans scheme

Friday 26 February 2016
1:25PM

By the end of last year six of the top 10 private training colleges were under a cloud, facing regulatory sanction, prosecution or threatened legal action by angry students

http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/regulator-flying-blind-in-widely-rorted-vet-fee-help-scheme/7202882?utm_medium=email&utm_source=sendpress&utm_campaign

The Commonwealth funds vocational education and training through student loans, but the scheme has been widely rorted and is playing havoc with state TAFE systems.

(In NSW) More than 3600 TAFE teachers or a third of the workforce have lost their jobs since the Coalition took office. Course fees have been raised and enrolments are down substantially.

John Spierings

- “The experiment in the ‘marketisation’ of vocational education developed across a like-minded circle of consultants, advisers and public servants proceeding without an electoral mandate and without adequate public debate, scrutiny or transparency. There has been no accountability for the public dollars lost and little apology for the careers that have advanced despite highly flawed implementation and poor outcomes.”

So what has happened?

Lots of reviews

Some reviews

- Various ASQA reviews
- 2014 Department of Industry review of training packages & accredited courses
- 2014 Department of Industry review of industry engagement in training packages
- 2014 House of Representative Standing Committee on Education & Employment on TAFE
- 2015 Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment on private providers

More reviews

- 2015 ACIL Allen Consulting on the national training partnership agreement
- 2016 Department of Education & Training on the quality of assessment in VET
- 2016 Department of Education & Training on VET Fee-HELP
- Various reviews in various states (for example, McKenzie & Coulson 2015 in Victoria)

And the new VET loans scheme

- Warbuton – ill conceived, rushed & deeply problematic
- Limits loans to programs for “courses that have a high national priority, meet industry needs, contribute to addressing skills shortages & lead to employment outcomes”
- Even though the link between qualifications & jobs is weak
- Working class students get told what they can study

But no fundamental reappraisal

- The *whole* system needs to be reviewed, not just bits of it
- ‘Training products’ cannot be considered independently of the market, institutions & the system

Dilemma!

- What should qualifications be like if they are so weakly linked to occupations?
- What does it mean to prepare people for work?
- Pathways shaped by structure of occupations
- Fixing the supply side (education) only won't solve these problems



Nature of the links between vocational education & the labour market

- Tying qualifications more closely to specific jobs reduces students' options & results in narrow training
- Need to prepare students for broader fields of practice

How qualifications are used in the labour market

Characteristic	Signal	Screen
Qualification role	To indicate specific skills	To indicate general potential
Qualification specification	Tight	General
Regulation	Usually specific	General
Labour market	Occupational	Internal and external

All qualifications serve 3 purposes

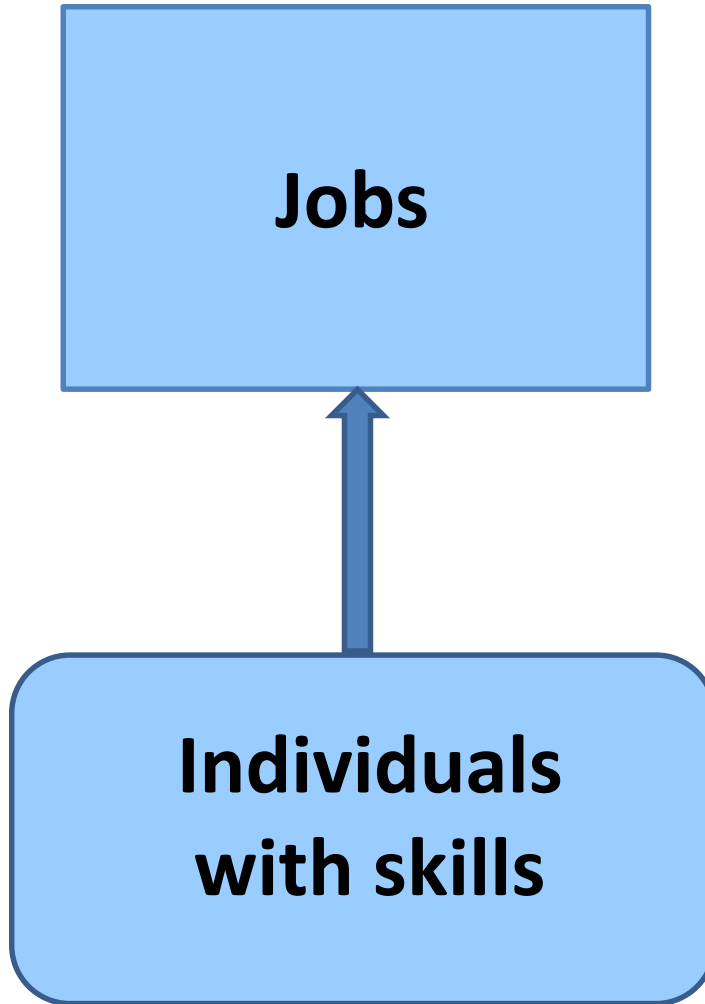
1. In the labour market: as a entry or upgrade qualification
2. In the education system: as a transition qualification to higher level qualifications
3. In society: to widen access to tertiary education & provide students with knowledge & skills to contribute to their occupation, communities & society



Qualifications not synonymous with workforce development

- Structures of work *condition & help shape* educational pathways
- Not suggesting a ‘tighter’ linear approach
- Qualifications not identical with specific occupations
- Workforce development must encompass a broader range of strategies

Current models of skills development



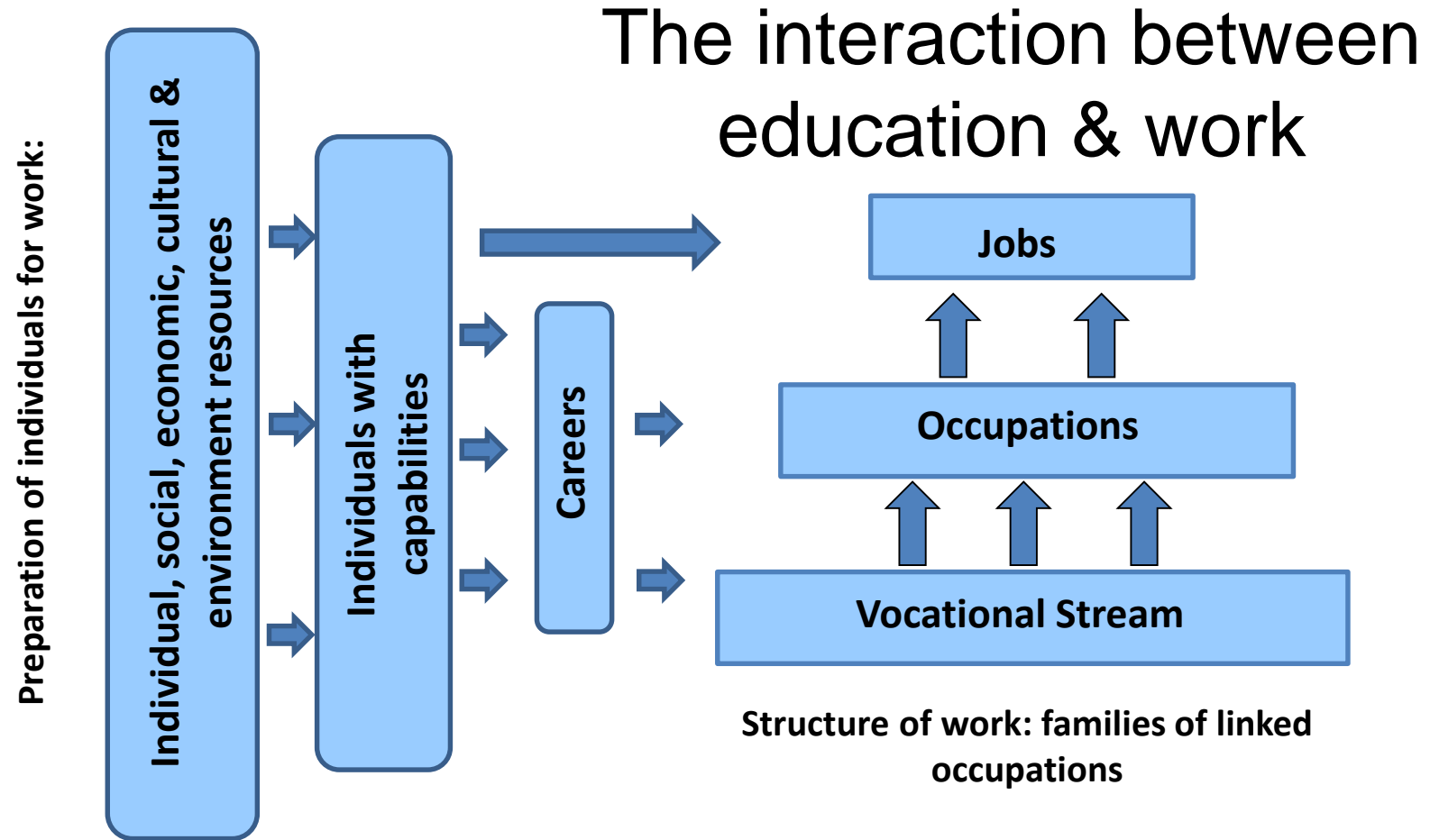
What are the alternatives?

Vocations & vocational streams

- Prepare people for a broader range of occupations
- Vocation: a domain of practice
- Structure work & education on vocational streams
- Vocational streams: linked occupations with common concepts & practices



Productive capabilities



What kind of actor?

- Rather than specific workplace requirements, focus is on development of person, attributes & knowledge & skills
- Starts with the *person* within vocational stream not workplace tasks & roles
- Allows coherent continuum of knowledge

What kind of institutions?

- Starting point needs to be:
 - How can we develop a system of high quality, trusted qualifications that meet the needs of students, industry & community?
 - What kind of institutions are needed to support that?
- TAFE not an interchangeable actor in a market

System of strong individual TAFE institutes

- Develop qualifications based on minimal national standards
- Underpinned by local industry involvement in accreditation
- Move away from a national system of qualifications – it hasn't worked, but we can protect national portability
- Institutions must invest in developing programs & institutional capacity

Articulate TAFE's mission & role

- Doing what universities & schools can't do
- Need a positive vision – role in anticipating, codifying, & institutionalising knowledge and skills for future
- Supporting innovation & thinking about what jobs will be like in the future
- As anchor institutions that support individuals, communities & industries
- Engaging with social partners – intermediary organisations

Need a new social settlement to underpin VET

- A review of the whole system is needed, & how it relates to the other sectors
- Articulate the role & purpose of VET, & TAFE as the anchor of the system
- We have incoherence now in a low trust system underpinned by a crisis of confidence, crisis of quality & fragmentation in qualifications, the market & the system

Thank you!

- John Cain Foundation
- Centre for Vocational and Educational Policy