this program in Broken Hill between 1990–1994; the staff of the Broken Hill Environmental Lead Centre; and the Working Party. We are grateful to Dr Stephen Corbett, Environmental Health Branch, for his continuing support and assistance.

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NSW HEALTH BECOMES A REGISTERED TRAINING ORGANISATION

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NSW Health has a strong commitment to providing learning and development services to the health workforce in NSW, including the public health workforce. In March 2000, the NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board (VETAB) issued NSW Health with a Certificate of Registration as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) for three years. This registration was the culmination of a long process of cooperation and collaboration between the NSW Department of Health, the Area Health Services, and the New Children's Hospital. This article describes the process by which NSW Health became an RTO, and its method of delivering vocational learning and development services.

BACKGROUND

Before NSW Health achieved RTO status, vocational training was conceived, designed and delivered independently by the Department of Health, individual Area Health Services, and the New Children's Hospital. (Although a part of NSW Health, the Ambulance Service of NSW remains a separately registered RTO.) Some of these organisations were registered to provide training, but few courses were accredited. Throughout the 1990s there was a gradual trend towards the delivery of accredited vocational training, which encompassed the notions of recognition of prior learning, competencies, workplace assessment, and articulation to higher qualifications.

The suggestion that NSW Health should become an RTO was first canvassed in the mid-1990s. The challenge was to negotiate a successful collaboration among the autonomous health organisations, which was necessary for the accreditation process. While these organisations were all part of NSW Health, there was no common charter, and many were already registered with VETAB to provide accredited training. While the impetus for a single accreditation for the whole of NSW Health came initially from the Area Health Services and the New Children's Hospital, the success of the accreditation process was very much due to the coordination and support provided by the NSW Department of Health through its then Human Resources Policy and Strategy Unit.

THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

Under section 22C of the Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Act 1990, VETAB registers organisations to:

- deliver vocational education and training (VET) courses
- provide assessment services
- issue qualifications.

To achieve and maintain RTO status, NSW Health must demonstrate compliance with the quality assurance and accreditation standards of national guidelines known as the Australian Recognition Framework (ARF). The Director-General and the Chief Executive Officers of the Area Health Services formally committed NSW Health to these standards in June 1999. The 12 ARF standards are listed in Table 1. The first seven standards (C1–C7) ensure that an RTO complies with quality, legislative and ethical requirements; while the remaining five standards (TD1–TD5) ensure that an RTO has the ability to deliver on-site training and assessment to the standards.

NATIONAL AUSTRALIAN RECOGNITION FRAMEWORK (ARF) STANDARDS REQUIRED FOR RTO ACCREDITATION

Code	Standard
C1	National principles
C2	Legislative requirements
C3	Access and equity
C4	Quality management focus
C5	External review process
C6	Management and administration
C7	Ethical marketing and advertising
TD1	Resources for delivery and assessment
TD2	Identifying learning needs and designing training products
TD3	Assessment
TD4	Client services
TD5	Issuance of qualifications and statements of attainment

COMPETENCY-BASED WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The focus of an RTO is vocational education and training (VET); that is, on the learning needs of the workforce, and on what people need to know and do in order to function effectively in their jobs. The NSW Health RTO delivers VET as short courses developed locally to meet specific organisational needs; or, which is becoming increasingly common, as nationally endorsed training packages. All VET focuses on competency-based learning using assessment standards that, in most (but not in all) instances, result in the attainment of nationally recognised and transferable qualifications ranging from short courses, to certificates, to diplomas, and one graduate diploma. The qualifications that the NSW Health RTO is registered to offer are listed in Table 2.

Some of the benefits to NSW Health in maintaining accredited RTO status are:

- VET learning and development can be coordinated effectively across NSW Health;
- workplace performance can be recognised;
- qualifications can be articulated to other higher education programs;
- a concomitant increase in learning options and pathways to completion.

NSW Health offers a suite of VET courses, many of which traditionally had been the domain of the Technical and Further Education sector, in an array of subject areas, such as:

- health promotion
- indigenous health
- community services
- health care support services

- business and office administration
- information technology
- workforce development.

DIVERSITY, FLEXIBILITY AND PORTABILITY

The NSW Health RTO is unique. It provides a diverse range of methods of delivery and assessment from face-to-face models to flexible delivery. The advantage of this degree of flexibility is that many different learning and development services within NSW Health can tailor an approach to delivery and assessment to meet its particular workforce development needs.

In many instances, a health worker's career can be enhanced by qualifications that combine both vocational and academic components. It is here that the NSW Health RTO has the capacity to enhance the career pathways of health workers by providing them with 'advanced standing' (that is, credits for prior learning) should they wish to enrol in an academic course in the tertiary sector. Because several universities offer NSW Health RTO students variable levels of advanced standing into undergraduate and master's courses, this brings with it real cost savings to students.

THE DELIVERY OF NON CLINICAL VOCATIONAL HEALTH TRAINING

In the NSW Department of Health *Information Bulletin* (Number 2000/21), dated 11 October 2000, the Director-General outlines the role of the Health Service Learning and Development Centres within each Area Health Service, which are responsible for overseeing the delivery of non-clinical vocational training. In addition to providing an overview of the accreditation process, this information bulletin provides information on the role of Health Learning and Development Managers in each Area, the minimum qualification required of trainers, the method of program delivery and accreditation of new training courses, and guidelines for the issuing and articulation of qualifications.

Role of Health Learning and Development Managers
The Health Learning and Development Manager of each Area Health Service, and of the New Children's Hospital, is accountable for ensuring local compliance with the policies and procedures of the Australian Recognition Framework. The NSW Health Learning and Development Managers Forum is responsible for maintaining and reviewing training standards, protocols and procedures. The NSW Health RTO Standards Group, a sub-committee of the Health Learning and Development Managers Forum, is responsible for monitoring the learning and development activities of each Area Health Service, and for reporting on learning and development outcomes to the Forum.

TABLE 2

QUALIFICATIONS THAT NSW HEALTH IS REGISTERED TO DELIVER THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, THE AREA HEALTH SERVICES, AND THE NEW CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL *

Graduate Diploma

Applied Epidemiology (7270)

Diploma

Business (Administration) (BSA50197)
Community Services (Aged Care Work) (CHC50199)
Community Services (Alcohol & Other Drugs Work) (CHC50299)
Community Services (Mental Health Work-Non Clinical) (CHC50899)
Frontline Management (7042)
Information Technology (Business Analysis) (ICA50399)
Information Technology (Multimedia Integration) (ICA50599)
Information Technology (Network Engineering) (ICA50499)
Information Technology (System Administration) (ICA50199)

Certificate IV

Assessment and Workplace Training (B5Z40198)
Business (Administration) (B5A40197)
Community Services (Aged Care Work) (CHC40199)
Community Services (Alcohol & Other Drugs Work) (CHC40299)
Community Services (Mental Health Work - Non Clinical) (CHC40899)
Frontline Management (7041)
Health Promotion (10537NSW)
Hospitality (Food and Beverage Supervision) (THH42397)
Hospitality Operations Food & Beverage (10654N5W)
Information Technology (Client Support) (1CA40199)
Information Technology (Database Administration) (1CA40299)
Information Technology (Network Management) (1CA40399)
Information Technology (Technical Support) (1CA40599)
Management and Team Development (10990N5W)

Certificate III

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health (11790N5W)
Business (Office Administration) (B5A30197)
Care Support Services (Personal Assistant) (Traineeship) (5534)
Care Support Services, Nursing Assistant (5533)
Care Support Services (Nursing Assistant) Recognition Course (10407NSW)
Care Support Services Aged Care Work (15120N5W)
Community Care Ancillary Services (AQF) (4040)
Community Services (Aged Care Work) (CHC30199)

Certificate III (continued)

Community Services (Alcohol and Other Drugs) (CHC30299)
Community Services (Mental Health Work - Non Clinical) (CHC30899)
Frontline Management (7040)
Health (Aboriginal Health Worker & Torres Strait Islander Health Worker) (JJOJ8NSW)
Hospitality (Accommodation Services) (THH32897)
Hospitality (Food and Beverage) (THH32797)
Information Technology (General) (1CA30299)
Information Technology (Network Administration) (ICA30399)
Management and Team Development (10991N5W)
Security (Guarding) (PR530198)

Certificate II

Business (Office Administration) (B5A20197)
Community Services (Aged Care Work) (CHC20199)
Community Services (Alcohol & Other Drugs Work) (CHC20299)
Health Support Services (6489)
Hospitality (Operations) (THH21897)
Security (Guarding) (PRS20198)

Certificate I

Business (Office Skills) (B5A10197)

Courses

Aggression Minimisation (10365N5W)
Basic Foot Care for Nurses (12850N5W)
Communication Skills for Safety—A (1732)
Health Promotion (10538N5W)
Hyperbaric Nursing (14977N5W)
Industrial Relations in a Health Care Setting (13959N5W)
Managing Grievance and Discipline Situations (1713)
Managing Farm Safety (10490NSW)
Medical Terminology in a Health Care Setting (5875)
Performance Management (10994N5W)
Principles of EEO (90103N5W)
Occupational Health and Safety for Managers (10993N5W)
Selection Procedures (10992N5W)
Staff Selection Procedures in a Health Care Setting (14186N5W)
Supervision Within a Health Care Setting (6478)
Supervision and Management Within a Health Care Setting (6477)

*   The Ambulance Service of NSW is a separately accredited RTO, and as such its accredited learning and development services are not listed here.
    This list of qualifications accredited by NSW Health is correct as of October 2000. Many new qualifications have been added since then, and are continually being added.

PROGRAM DELIVERY AND ACCREDITATION OF NEW TRAINING COURSES

Across NSW Health, Health Service Learning and Development Centres will conduct training courses and assessment processes, and issue certificates up to and including Diploma level, while the NSW Department of Health continues to issue the Graduate Diploma in Applied Epidemiology through the NSW Public Health Officer's Training Program. The accreditation of new courses and re-accreditation of expired courses will be managed by the Health Learning and Development Managers Forum.

All training must feature competency-based learning outcomes and workplace assessment procedures, and be sourced from relevant National Training Packages.

Qualification of Trainers

As their minimum qualification, trainers responsible for the delivery and assessment of VETAB accredited training programs are required to have a Certificate in Assessment and Workplace Training (Table 2).

Issue of Qualifications

All certificates issued for course completion, following formal assessment procedures, are issued by the Health Service Learning and Development Manager under delegation from NSW Health. All accredited training programs will be recognised for articulation to TAFE and University programs by the Health Learning and Development Managers Forum.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Ensuring consistency in standards across such a large and geographically diverse RTO remains a challenge. To this end, the Learning and Development Services of different areas periodically undertake peer audit for compliance to the ARF standards outlined in Table 1. A further challenge is forging a strategic vision for learning across NSW Health. In this regard, NSW Health must provide its staff with wider choices of VET qualifications, and greater access to a variety of learning pathways, to improve the workforce development necessary to drive changes in the way health care is delivered to the people of NSW. The aim is to provide the health workforce with choices from a suite of recognised qualifications delivered through a diversity of pathways and approaches to on-the-job learning, with in-built articulation to higher level qualifications. As a training provider, NSW Health has come a long way in the last decade. ▦

TINNITUS AWARENESS KIT FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Tinnitus is a condition with many causes, which is experienced as noises such as a ringing, hissing or booming in one or both ears. The condition has physical, psychological and social effects that can become distressing and severely disrupt the lives and personalities of tinnitus sufferers. In Australia, it is estimated that 11 per cent of the population has tinnitus,[1] while a total of 18 per cent of the population has had tinnitus at some stage.[2] However, only about 15 per cent of tinnitus sufferers present for treatment.[3] In the United Kingdom, seven people in every 100 see their general practitioner with tinnitus as the primary cause of their visit.[1]

Tinnitus is now becoming a specialised field in medicine, audiology,[4] and psychology. A Tinnitus Awareness Kit has been produced by the Australian Tinnitus Association (NSW), to assist health professionals to better understand tinnitus; become aware of the different methods of relieving and coping with tinnitus; and learn about treatments that are available. The principle components of the Kit are:

- six information leaflets for the health professional;
- a tinnitus information handout for patients, with details of how to obtain further copies if required;
- a three-minute compact disc that plays 17 of the most common tinnitus noises;
- information on how to order books, videos, and tapes about tinnitus.

To obtain copies of the Tinnitus Awareness Kit please contact the Australian Tinnitus Association (NSW) by mail: PO Box 660, Woollahra, NSW, 1350; by telephone: (02) 8382 3331 or 8382 3338; by facsimile: (02) 8382 3333; or by email: **info@tinnitus.asn.au**. Further information about tinnitus, self-help groups, useful links, an awareness kit for teachers, an interactive site for kids, and the work of the Australian Tinnitus Association (NSW), can be obtained from the ATA Web site at **www.tinnitus.asn.au**.

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