

**Summary of participant views - VET Reform National Consultations - Adelaide, 2 February 2015,**  
**Afternoon Session**

**Priorities for Future VET Reform**

**Summary of feedback**

**Industry responsiveness:**

- Industry responsiveness: the role of industry; how to encourage greater industry involvement; and whether training is meeting the needs of industry?
- The role of Industry isn't clear at the moment; industry needs to be better informed of their role and have a better understanding of the VET sector.
- There was general consensus that greater industry engagement is needed and finding appropriate incentives/motivation is necessary.

**Quality:**

- Whilst it was noted that the Australian VET system is internationally recognised as best practice; there were still a number of quality concerns raised.
- More stringent investigation by ASQA into poor providers is needed, but also audits that focus on outcomes rather than processes and the macro level.

**Streamlining and deregulation:**

- There was consensus that inconsistencies across states is causing issues and raising costs in the VET sector.
- Processes such as regulation and funding need to be more streamlined and there was the suggestion that the best aspects of each model should be used in developing a nationally consistent model.

**Funding:**

- National consistency was again raised by participants in relation to funding models and it was highlighted that inconsistencies are reducing confidence and stability in the sector.
- A number of participants called for greater co-funding of VET.

**Specific points raised during discussion**

**Industry responsiveness:**

- Role of industry
  - What is the role of industry and how does it engage and have an understanding of its role in that process?
  - Industry must be involved in setting funding – particularly around what it needs (i.e. units if not full qualifications; funding WELL programs) and making it accessible to people.
  - Need for employers and industry to be educated to help them understand the VET sector better, and their role in it.

- Encouraging industry involvement
  - Typically it is just the larger organisations that are involved.
  - Incentivising (monetary terms, tax breaks) is very important for getting small business involved and has more impact on that sector than bigger organisations.
  - Motivation or pay off to engage Industry – emphasis on industry getting the skilled staff they need.
  - Facilitate relationships from a package perspective – a case management approach facilitated by government.
  - Department should publish the examples they have of really good industry provider relationships already working in SA.
  - RTOs generally have good industry involvement and tap into industry experts but need more forums for RTOs to engage with industry.
  - RTOs should be looking at establishing and maintaining good partnerships with companies.
  - Government should facilitate relationships to involve industry/enterprise in processes.
- Training that meets industry needs
  - Currently not really giving industry what they want.
  - How do we clearly identify the needs of the marketplace and the VET sector?
  - Industry needs are different – not one size fits all and solutions need to take account of differences.
  - Industry expects VET graduates to be fully effective on day one – VET students need to be groomed for the job and given support from industry.
  - Qualifications are out of touch and there is a disconnection between ISCs and real industry - Environmental scans aren't representative of people at the coal face.
  - Increasing role for non-accredited providers as they provide exactly what employers want and are more responsive than RTOs that stick to Training Packages.
  - There are definitely job outcomes for non-accredited training but reporting a bit fractured.
- Lack of Industry Skills Boards.
- Workplace practice puts burden on employers.
- Industry isn't accepting poor quality.
- Training Packages need RTO input to decide if the Training Package is actually trainable.

**Quality:**

- Our VET system can't be that bad, it is recognised as international best practice.
- High quality delivery is so important in ensuring RTOs can produce highly responsive employees and so individuals can learn the right skills and at the right pace for what industry requires of them.
- Support for whole qualifications.
- ASQA/regulation
  - ASQA to undertake more active investigations into poor quality providers - Government organisations don't like to invest in prosecutions that aren't successful but what's the alternative?
  - Audits focus on internal processes etc. but should focus on student outcomes.
  - Ensure macro-level compliance focus rather than micro.
  - States shouldn't expect the same evidence as what is sent to regulators – duplication.
  - Streamline process for re-registration. Less administrative process focus and more focus on educational outcomes.

- New standards
  - New regulations are an over-correction.
  - New standards – churned out. Continuous improvement process is an extremely drawn out process.
- Better information for RTOs and learners
  - Good practice for brokers could be outlined.
  - Stronger communication to students about the quality, potential job outcomes and relationship to further studies.
- Quality students are coming in – not just because JSAs are compelling them to, but they want to be there.
- From the compliance side (outcomes), need access to infrastructure that's been publically funded and less focus on compliance?
- There is large variation in quality of materials – ISCs should approve the quality of materials.
- Funding could be a lever to drive good practice and quality.
- Capability of trainers and assessors – tension between process and educating.
- VET in Schools should not be different – Industry perception around schools being less well equipped to offer VET is not true.
- Maintain focus on trades – e.g. value Cert III equally across areas.
- AQF levels are not understood/followed during training package development.

#### **Streamlining and deregulation:**

- More streamlined approach for apprentices, particularly ASBAs.
- There is lack of state harmonisation for regulation and funding models - take best aspects of each model and create one national (funding) model.
- Inconsistencies across states - some states allow providers to come in from every other state which limits their own state. (the point being made here is not clear to me)
- Having to deal with state/national issues – funding glut and then funding stops (links with quality).
- Providers find it difficult to deliver quality when they're spread so thinly given all the demands placed on them - make it easier for RTOs e.g. provide data once, digitally.
- Streamline processes, especially for re-registration, so that RTOs can concentrate on student outcomes and employer satisfaction (focus on training outcomes not administrative processes).
- Need representation from every state when Training Packages are being reviewed and developed e.g. Sport and Recreation packages were quite different in SA versus NSW.
- Coherent National coordination will provide stability and confidence.
- Clearer roles and responsibilities for regulators, commonwealth and state and territories.
- Government to refer to VET sector and not TAFE sector – Public and Private Providers are options.

#### **Funding:**

- Partnerships – strategic employment fund outcomes.
- Co-funding
  - Co-funding and possibly three-way contribution which may involve the staff member, industry and govt.
  - Shared investment helps improve engagement and retention rates.
  - Support for co-contribution for funding.
- Funding models can work to distort quality – may not meet industry needs

- National consistency
  - No national way of rolling out funding – difficult being state-based.
  - Lack of consistent funding models around the country - national system but multiple funding models.
  - National coordination and coherence to meet confidence and stability in the sector.
  - Interstate providers should be able to access funding for national qualifications across states.
  - Funding model doesn't include some Cert III courses.
- Some former models worked better than today's model. Eg. Training guarantee levy, CIT in SA.
- Affordability for students - VET sector becoming more expensive for students and fees differentiated by necessity of training and job demand.
- If industry has a major trigger driving training they shouldn't be locked out of funding opportunities because they're not a STEM.
- Nominal hours and \$ per hour insufficient to ensure quality.
- De-focus on whole qualifications.
- Funding for Australian Apprenticeships is a priority.
- Ensure open and equal access to publicly-funded infrastructure (TAFE v private RTOs).
- Government funding is unreliable.
- Major industry reform/regulation/legislation needs to be addressed in funding.

**Other areas for reform:**

- Pathways that work to and from university, VET and employment
- Training Packages
  - Speed in developing training products (Lag in development from review to the realisation of a Training Package).
  - Support skills for current and new job roles - broader skills and knowledge needed. Not one qualification equals a job now.
  - Reduce number of units/qualifications and streamline - to suit job role you need to pick from different packages/qualifications.
  - A considerable amount of duplication has happened during revisions of new Training Packages (can get two identical performance criteria in the one unit) - maybe a solution is having a direct lineage to somebody who has control over the proofing/editing process.
  - Training packages can be too long.
- Disconnect in the number of industries involved in sign-up/training. 6 months before RTO knows they've got a trainee. AACE needs to better enable recruitment, sign-up, etc.
- Industry experts that volunteer will not participate if we ask them to get a training skill set (Will be a big problem in January 2016).
- Amount of change – major impact on smaller RTOs and cause them to close which will have impact on diversity in the industry.
- Bring back technical high schools.
- Need to be futuristic in our thinking – look at the big picture – We're moving into service economy (trade agreements with China and India).
- Need to talk about industry reform – there is a big shift towards home and community care, Need to get training happening now, but the ISF excludes aged care and hospitals.

## **Review of Training Packages and Accredited Courses**

### **Summary of feedback**

- Participants were of the view that changes already underway to Training Packages needed to be embedded before more changes are made.
- Participants were also of the view that the number of training packages, qualifications and units of competency should be reduced.
- Assessment is too vague and needs to be improved.
- Flexibility needs to remain in training packages to allow training to meet the needs of different industries and sectors.

### **Specific points raised during discussion**

#### **What objectives for training packages are important to you?**

- The qualification is important for employment processes.
- Need to revisit the purpose of the qualifications for Certificate II and up - pre-requisites are gone and are coming back as pre-entry.
- What are TPs and how they're constructed – underpinning learning theories that are based on the model of constructivism?
- Portability of qualification is important and valuable.

#### **What is working well?**

- Structure and review process is generally seen as ok.
- Some ISCs have good approaches, others not good but generally ok.
- Having imported units is working well.

#### **What areas need improvement?**

- **Engagement**
  - Intricacies around the new world of ISCs and what that's going to look like.
  - Important that Training Packages reflects the coal face industry needs and the skills required, both current and emerging.
  - Not all industries are the same and the training arrangements/products need to be appropriate to different industries.
  - Need skill sets or qualifications that meet needs of industry - this is the centre point around which other decisions are made.
- **RTO involvement**
  - Balance industry and RTO involvement – RTOs are excluded from development but there are examples where the Training Package is not deliverable or there are safety issues around qualification requirements.
  - What do we expect VETiS teachers to have and how do we expect them to get that? Teachers have a Diploma in Education, Certificate IV and the qualification they're teaching and also need currency. For hospitality – teachers have idea of what currency looks like, but industry thinks currency is something else.
- **Changes to training packages**
  - The main goal should be to strengthen and enhance the current system rather than reinvent the wheel.
  - Need changes to Training Packages to be bedded down before they're reviewed again.
  - Training Packages (ie. content) need to be kept up to date at all times.

- **Content**
  - The level of practicality is ok, but perhaps not the delivery component.
  - People understand training more than assessment.
  - Flexibility should still exist to allow focus on the needs of the individuals.
  - Some things work better in some industries than others (fitness versus retail). Some industries do it better than others.
  - Assessment issues between qualifications and providers.
  - Such variance and confusion around AQF level – e.g. different Certificate IIIs, IVs, and Diplomas. It's difficult to compare Certificate III in Fitness to Certificate III Transport (VETiS adds to this).
  - Have employability skills ever really been enhanced? – need a framework for lower level qualifications.
- **Other**
  - If we increase the number of skill sets they are recognised as non-completions in the data collection.
  - Break the nexus between industrial awards and VET qualifications.
  - Currency of a Statement of Attainment - if someone is competent, how long are they competent? Do they need to be reassessed?
  - Portability of Units of Competency.
  - Non-accredited training is being offered to meet a need that's out there, this tells you that there is a gap – the issue is: are they doing it well?

**Where improvement might be needed, what direction of reform, and in what area, would you favour?**

- **Training/Assessment**
  - Strong view that assessment is too vague at a Unit of Competency level.
  - Use of RPL and how it could be done better through competency based assessment to optimise completions.
  - Skills recognition and need for on the job assessment.
  - Better assessment.
- **Delivery**
  - It may be more imperative at the lower AQF level to have a stronger emphasis on learning and input (teaching learners how to learn) versus someone in industry upgrading to a Certificate IV/Dip.
  - Requirement for vocational placement is fundamental to assessing vocational competence - incentives needed for employers.
  - Trainers/Assessors
    - Need education around how to use products better - it's about the trainers and how qualified they are (could start in schools as well).
    - What is "currency" for trainers? Want it spelled out in Training Packages.
  - Should focus on how the skills are applied in a workplace situation - should be able to be demonstrated as part of a work placement.
- **Funding**
  - Cost of qualifications has gone up enormously because of change in technology and skills required.
  - Future increases to funding need to be considered to account for costs related to improving quality of what is delivered.

- **Development/design**
  - Spell out the risk factors in Training Packages more carefully as risk factors involved in Training Packages are high in some higher areas – e.g. equine industry (student fell from a horse – Supreme Court case) and explosives.
  - Job descriptions could be at the top of the package rather than the bottom and the jobs of the future could be looked at.
  - Units of Competency – generic like OH&S and how they can be generically applied across qualifications in the TP. Specialisation through electives.
  - How the framework could be changed in some ways – looking at broader access to knowledge across industry sectors. Clustering industry sectors where Units of Competency can be translated across sectors. Learners need to be more equipped with skills to allow them to transfer across sector.
  - Flexibility
    - One size doesn't fit all - flexibility is important.
    - Don't want flexibility removed.
    - Take imported units further with greater flexibility in packaging rules.
    - Greater flexibility needed for VETiS.
    - Training Packages are actually quite prescriptive and there is quality built into that but it's about their accessibility and readability.
  - Not just individual outcomes but also importance of employability skills and the employment outcome needs not just for the individual.
  - Want enough flexibility in Skill Sets so when you're working with industry to design a course you're not restricted to selecting Units of Competency that have sat there for 3 years – should be able to have a broad selection and not be locked in to skill sets.
- **Regulation**
  - There are system things causing issues that need tweaking around price regulation, hours regulation, need for consistent auditing processes - stop addressing symptoms not root causes.
- **Other**
  - Standardisation of qualifications - consolidation
    - Do we need all of the qualifications available on TGA?
    - There is duplication in Units of Competency - dislike of duplication of common units (eg. communication and safety and risk).
    - There isn't enough alignment across the earlier qualification Certificate IIs to lead into Certificate III.
    - Reinstate general skills which may help to take away duplication (a truck driver is a truck driver but not if you want to get a job in the mining sector).
    - More generic Units of Competency would serve the students so they can translate from one industry to another.
    - Structure of TPs in terms of core versus elective units when you're trying to be flexible enough to meet the needs of individuals and employers - sometimes you need to over service to meet the needs of employers.