

Summary of participant views - VET Reform National Consultations - Brisbane, 16 February 2015,
Morning Session

Priorities for Future VET Reform

Summary of feedback

Industry responsiveness:

- Industry expects graduates to be job ready, but this is often unrealistic. Industry needs to play a greater role in providing on-the-job training, inductions and mentoring to ensure learners know 'how to work'.
- The wealth of experience and knowledge held by people in businesses is not being used for training. Industry employers are not willing and/or able to meet the Certificate IV TAE requirements.

Quality:

- According to many participants there is a need for greater clarity and consistency around regulatory requirements. Messaging from individual auditors is inconsistent and they require better training to understand education and industry.
- Participants were of the view that VET professionals very often lack the capability to assess, which???? is impacting on the outcomes of assessment.
- Outcomes should be measured at the individual unit level, rather than being based on full qualifications.

Streamlining and deregulation:

- Participants mentioned that there are issues with inconsistencies between state and Commonwealth systems and would like more national consistency, especially for licensing.

Funding:

- Participants called for outcomes-based funding which is provided at the point of completion rather than up front. However, they also reiterated that skill set and individual unit completions should be recognised as outcomes, not just full qualification completion.

Specific points raised during discussion

Industry responsiveness:

- It is hard to define who industry is.
- Graduates that are job ready
 - Does industry know what it wants? The expectation that the VET sector will give an employee all the skills and knowledge to be able to step into a role and be able to perform from day 1 is unrealistic.
 - What is the role of the sector in terms of inducting, mentoring then contextualising training for a specific employer? The solution is consistent application via peak bodies and educating the industries that they operate in.
 - Learners need to get work experience while undertaking training so that they are job ready.
 - Learning how to work and getting the skills they need in the workplace – e.g. getting to work on time, assisting to achieve goals.

- Need to acknowledge that the system does work – 20% of the system needs to be flexible for businesses and individuals, but how can that be integrated?
- Do ISCs recognise industry accurately and do they get involved in changes to training packages just to justify own existence?
- Trainer preparation (Certificate IV TAE) is inadequate for providing industry experience – trainers can't relate training to relevant industry experience and many are unable to assess.
- How do we get industry more involved in training – so much experience out there and great human resources and skills but they have no inclination, or ability, to undertake the TAE qualification process?
- Training Packages are designed by trainers rather than people from industry.
- Employers need to be educated on the value of the VET sector.
- Need a balanced approach from industry – sometimes get feedback from SMEs who provide about 80% of training for individuals, but feel that feedback is usually from big business.

Quality:

- Need clarity and consistency around the regulatory environment with better trained regulators who understand the education and industry environments that the RTO is operating in, as well as knowing the regulations.
- Consistent messaging and outcomes of audits – common themes and messages so RTOs know where regulators stand and the priorities.
- Constant changes cost a lot in terms of compliance.
- There is no real sense of benchmarking – improve national standards so that kids coming out at Certificate III are all equivalent and meet a certain level of skills and competency.
- Measure completion rates at the unit level, recognising that not all individuals and employers need full qualifications.
- VET professionals
 - Capable assessors are difficult to find which impacts on the quality of assessment outcomes
 - Industry credibility could be enhanced by having a VET professional body and professional development points
 - Need for broader understanding of the finer points of training and assessment.

Streamlining and deregulation:

- Issues with consistency between state and federal bodies for approach to funding and regulation.
- National consistency is good - such as for training packages, national regulation/regulator.
- National licensing would be good.

Funding:

- Funding should be targeted at the skill set or unit level.
- Funding should be outcome focused - provided at point of completion rather than commencement and retain a proportion of funding for RTOs if the quality achieved is to a good standard.
- Target funding to skills required for Australia's future, rather than being reactive.

Other areas for reform:

- Training packages
 - Very specific sometimes but need more generic skills.
 - Streamline redevelopment of training packages with the option for industry to update the package so that a specific unit can be changed and then inserted/incorporated when the full training package is reviewed (e.g. technology).
- Promote the VET sector as a pathway into other education and integrate university and VET to improve pathways.
- Support training providers to be able to recognise issues and promote self-reliance and remote employment opportunities – e.g. indigenous housing.
- Skills to employment transition issues for **VET in schools**, sometimes due to the lack of work placement opportunities for individuals– e.g. Certificate II Manufacturing and Constructing.

Review of Training Packages and Accredited Courses

Summary of feedback

- Greater industry engagement in training packages design and training needed and training needs to be flexible to meet industry skill needs.
- There was agreement that the time taken to change training packages is too slow and is affecting the currency of qualifications. Participants suggested allowing industry to make rapid changes which would be captured in the new version of the package.
- Participants were concerned about the quality of assessment and suggested capstone tests, standardised assessment with greater clarity within training packages about workplace assessment expectations.

Specific points raised during discussion

What objectives for training packages are important to you?

- Objective should be informed by professionals and driven by employment outcomes.

What is working well?

- The core of the system is solid.
- It is good that the Standards reference training packages.

What areas need improvement?

- **Engagement**
 - More engagement from industry?
 - Need more flexibility in training packages to meet industry skills needs.
 - The notion of industry standards carries implied capabilities.
 - Industry needs to develop package to meet the need of niche/growing areas in the medical area.
 - Training packages should consider the individual student's future and not just the needs of industry.
 - We should look at job roles (future and current) as a basis for training packages rather than qualifications.

- **Changes to training packages**
 - Pace of change
 - The process of changing training packages is too long. Training packages take too long to respond to changes within industry.
 - Flexibility should be written into training packages so speed of change less important
 - Recognise rapid industry change and reflect it in training packages in a timely way (e.g. construction).
- **Content**
 - Do training packages have the right name? They are really about occupational skills not training.
 - Getting the right balance between generic and technical skills is difficult.
- **Other**
 - Skill sets and units of competency should have a better standing.

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

- **Training/Assessment**
 - Training Packages work, but there are problems (gaps) between institutionalised training and workplace learning.
 - Training packages should deliver basic skills with industry to complete work readiness.
 - Assessment
 - Capstone test for trade, profiling, third party assessments.
 - Greater emphasis on assessment.
 - Role for standardised assessment and volume of learning.
 - Balance assessment requirement and conditions.
 - Improve the industry currency of trainers or assessors in terms of training and assessment.
 - Training packages need to be clearer about workplace assessment expectations.
- **Funding**
 - Skills sets should be available to meet the needs of industry and be better recognised.
- **Development/design**
 - More companion volumes (including for the TAE) - should be developed for all training packages.
 - Training package format is flexible - core competencies that match the term 'vocation', and electives which allow customisation.
 - Needs to be more education around training plans and utilising flexibility and the added flexibility that industry could bring.
 - Language needs to be consistent, it's hard to map with inconsistent language and descriptors.
 - Issue with LLN should be addressed through separate units in qualifications.
 - Accredited courses are important for meeting emerging needs and they are responsive.

- Overseas trade is important.
- **Regulation**
 - If an RTO has a qualification on scope, it should be able to deliver any skill sets contained within the qualification without having to re-register.
 - There needs to be greater connection between regulators and skills development.

Other

- Transition and teach out is a major issue, for example the RII training package, particularly for apprentices.
- Streamline online courses – for specific qualifications.