

A more skilled labour force – improving education and training

Business relevant, high-quality education and training boosts innovation, encourages investment and supports jobs growth. The Government aims to create a world's best practice Vocational Education and Training (VET) system that provides the skills for jobs of the future.

Improving the vocational education and training system

The VET system is well regarded but can be improved. It has several strengths including nationally recognised qualifications, industry-directed content, and training delivery through a mixture of public and private providers. However, concerns have been raised about its ability to deliver the skills demanded by the Australian economy.

As part of the Competitiveness Agenda, the Government is introducing the next wave of reforms for the VET sector.

A new model for apprenticeship support services

The Government will implement new arrangements for the delivery of support to Australian apprentices and their employers from 1 July 2015. The new Australian Apprenticeship Support Network will simplify and improve user access to the Australian Apprenticeships system. The Network service hubs aim to improve apprenticeship retention, completion and satisfaction rates by providing quality end-to-end services including:

- ▶ entry-level screening and testing to ensure assisted apprentices are equipped with 'foundation' skills and are suitably matched to their training courses and occupations;
- ▶ job matching for apprentices and employers to ensure the "right fit" employer and training;
- ▶ individual case management and mentoring of at-risk apprentices and employers; and
- ▶ streamlined administration of training contracts.

Streamlining Governance and Regulation

The Government has committed to providing simpler and more streamlined governance and regulatory arrangements for the national VET system.

- ▶ The Government is working with States and Territories to implement the decisions of the COAG Industry and Skills Council to streamline governance arrangements and committees and establish a single body – the Australian Industry and Skills Committee. This Committee is an industry-led body that will drive training policies, quality assure training packages, and determine industry research priorities. The Minister for Industry will also be directly advised by industry on skills issues through his recently established VET Advisory Board.
- ▶ The funding model for the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) has been reformed to enable it to become a more modern regulator, better able to target their activities to the circumstances of the individual provider. The new model will enable ASQA to improve education and support for training providers and reward high performers with greater autonomy and flexibility, while focusing more regulatory effort on dealing with rogue operators. ASQA has already streamlined processes for training providers. Providers are no longer required to apply and pay a fee to have ASQA update their scope of registration for a new qualification that is deemed equivalent to one they already have on scope. In addition, ASQA will soon invite highly compliant providers to apply for a delegation to be able to update their own scope.

Ongoing work programme

The Government is working to address additional issues in the VET sector. Work will shortly commence on a full review of training packages and accredited courses to identify ways in which they can better meet the needs of industry now and into the future. In addition, work is underway to identify better ways to engage industry and businesses in the development of training packages and move to a more contestable model for developing them. Options are also being explored to improve data collection and information sharing between key VET stakeholders, and possible reforms for VET in schools and school based apprenticeships to ensure they align with general VET sector reforms.

A key focus for the Government will be on improving training completion rates and employment outcomes from the more than \$6 billion jointly invested by the Government, States and Territories in vocational education and training. Improvements in these areas are essential to support Australia's productivity and economic growth.

The Australian Government, with agreement from the States and Territories, will implement a National VET Complaints Hotline for consumers to streamline and simplify the reporting of complaints. The Hotline will be run by the Australian Government and will direct complaints to the relevant authorities to address consumers' complaints and protect the interest of students.

The Government is working with States and Territories through COAG, the COAG Industry and Skills Council and the Reform of the Federation White Paper on these and other opportunities to improve the VET system nationally.