

Creating a future direction for Australian vocational education and training – Discussion paper

Skills Australia would like to hear your views on the Discussion paper and welcomes your comments or submissions by **26 November 2010**.

To assist with the analysis of comments received, we request that feedback is provided using this template. You may want to address some or all questions. Comments and submissions may be as long or short as you wish.

The submissions we receive may be posted on our website or quoted. Please indicate in the space provided below if you would like your comments/submission to remain confidential.

Submission information

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Do you agree to your comments/submission being posted on our website or quoted? *Please answer yes or no.*

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Please type your response in the space provided after each question, save as a .doc or .RTF file and email the completed form to secretariat@skillsaustralia.gov.au or post to Skills Australia, GPO Box 9880, Canberra ACT 2601

Creating a future direction for Australian vocational education and training

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Improving the VET experience

Workforce development – a new mandate for the sector

If VET is to help industry and enterprises make the most of the skills of their employees how can training providers be encouraged to take on this workforce development role, how can this be funded and how should this investment be measured?

- Training needs to offer increased non-traditional career options for girls and women, including incentives for same.
- Communication to secondary school girls re non-traditional careers e.g.: women in construction industry, guiding students to explore pathways so as to make fully informed subject choices towards gaining traineeships/apprenticeships and employment in viable careers that offer full time work and decent pay.
- There needs to be a clear pathway from secondary school (commencing in year 8) through to traineeships and VET with the ultimate outcome being employment.
- An attention to women/gender issues in all national strategies and policies.
- Funding needs to be arranged for affordable access to traineeships and apprenticeships with employment paid for by industry and education and training by VET.
- Administration should be undertaken by VET so as to enable and encourage small business taking on apprenticeships and trainees.

Improving learners' experiences of VET

If we are to get better results for learners do training providers need new or better ways of doing business? What aspects of VET delivery need to change and how? For example, work-based delivery; use of ICT; student support; qualifications offered; income support; employment services? Other changes?

- All forms of sexual discrimination against girls and women in VET courses which are traditionally attended by males needs to be strongly addressed within the VET institutions.
- Clear employment pathways established i.e.: guaranteed employment at the end of training. This can only be done through partnerships with industry organisations.
- Affordable access to childcare and OSHC for women returning to study and a more flexible and affordable system to assist women attending VET.

Are current reforms, such as training package improvements, sufficient for developing skills for the future? Should there be more emphasis on skills sets? How can competency based training evolve further, building on the broad based skills and knowledge needed for contemporary careers? What role might VET degrees play?

Re-engineering apprenticeships

Is the apprenticeship model the right one for the future or is it too constraining and bureaucratic?

- Apprenticeships are vital to link VET with industry and guarantee that the applicant has a clear pathway to qualifications and secure employment.

What is the best way to raise apprenticeship completion rates and make apprenticeships more attractive to both individuals and employers?

- The real issue is the lack of apprenticeships available for girls and women in VET in the non traditional work areas. High discrimination levels are not ensuring take up and sustainable outcomes.
- Unfortunately this often also comes from teachers as well as students.

Lifting performance

Shifting the quality focus

Are the current performance measures for the VET sector appropriate? Should we have greater focus on long term student outcomes in learning and work? On contribution to workforce development? On social and community outcomes? Others?

- Yes, VET needs to demonstrate outcomes as far as securing employment as a result of the training.
- Partnerships between industry organisations where there is a growing need for future employment e.g.: Childcare workers, Care Workers for the elderly and people with disabilities need to be established.
- Curriculum needs to be relevant to overall industry needs which will then result in clear pathways to employment. However, if curriculum is too tailored to a specific industry it may not be transferable to other jobs if the applicant chooses to leave his/her place of work.

Should we be worried about low qualification completions rates in VET? Are qualification completions an appropriate success indicator? Should funding be linked to provider performance to improve student outcomes?

- Yes we should be worried and yes it should be linked to provider performance to improve student outcomes. Teachers KPI's should be based around student retention and completion rates.

What information about VET providers' performance, including key performance indicators, should be made public?

- It should all be made public (like the My School system) so students can compare performing VET institutions.

How can the quality and relevance of graduate outcomes be improved? What is industry's role? Is there a place for moderation and review of assessment by external bodies such as the Industry Skills Councils?

- Yes. Also there needs to be measurements around gender participation and retention in non traditional roles

How can we promote and support professional practice in VET teachers and trainers?

- Set KPI's around attracting students, retaining students, completion rates and transition into employment.
- Value teachers work in VET- especially those in TAFE. This workforce is far too casualised. The VET workforce should also include EEO strategies along with strategies for women in leadership positions, especially in male dominated areas.

Better connections across sectors

What are the best models for future VET and higher education collaborations— dual-sector universities, formal networks of institutes and universities, or polytechnics? Other approaches? Is this something governments should facilitate or should it be left up to institutions?

What changes to credit transfer and/or articulation arrangements need to take place to increase the number of students who move between school, ACE, VET and higher education?

RPL is far too complex and costly. It should be available at a community based level, and also be accompanied by appropriate career counselling, so people don't get moved too quickly into courses without full understanding of the implications of this (esp women)

How can the links between VET and schools and VET and the Adult Community Education sector be strengthened?

- Better valuing and resourcing of pathways for learners into pre vocational courses. This may well include single sex courses, programs for women for new arrivals (and others)
- Such courses also need funding, and should not be subject to competitive funding regimes.
- Further investigation and support of Certs 1 -3, and RPL for those seeking to enter training, reskill.

Establishing strong foundations for growth

Funding sources for growth

If VET is to grow how is this to be funded? What are your thoughts on –increased tuition fees with income-contingent loans; increased co-funding of programs for employers; the introduction of an industry levy?

- Provision must be made for the maintenance of publicly funded VET, that is equitable and affordable. The contestable market driven models such as that proposed by Victoria will prevent access by many who need to undertake VET, but cannot afford it.
- If the VET system is to be 'industry driven', then industry should contribute more- revisit the idea of the training levy. Training is investment- it should not be viewed by industry as a cost.

What potential benefits or issues do you see if public funding to providers were to be based on outcomes such as qualification completions? Could entitlement funding be combined with outcome-based funding? If so, how would this work?

Governance for the future

What do you see as the top policy priorities to recommend to governments for a new intergovernmental agreement for skills and workforce development?

It is vital to build the economic security of Australian women and girls by ensuring their access to funded relevant training that enhances career pathways and equitable employment outcomes through their participation in VET. This includes women's participation across all programs including traineeships, apprenticeships, and employment creation programs.

It is important to Identify industries & occupations with viable career pathways – work that is emergent, in skills shortage areas including non traditional fields - where existing participation of women remains at a low ratio in work and study in VET

Actions could include:

1. Identify, collate & prioritise documented best practice gender sensitive programs and strategies that have been successful for women in emergent and non-traditional areas of work.
2. Identify selected industries and occupations where initiatives including programs for women can be run to increase and support women's engagement and inclusion.

Product development initiatives could include:

1. e-bulletin to assist VET staff locate funds for projects for women and girls
2. e-Publication: Value-added recruitment

How can any weaknesses in shared government responsibility be addressed?

What type of flexibility might TAFE institutes need to operate effectively in a more competitive market? Are any governance reforms needed to increase operational flexibility?

There needs to be recognition of past neglect and the need for gender analyses and inclusion in any national equity strategy as it relates to VET.

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Economic Security4Women (eS4W) is committed to achieving “lifelong economic well being for all Australian Women”. Funded through the Federal Government’s Office for Women and representing an alliance of 30 women based member organisations, eS4W believes in a holistic approach to economic wellbeing; an outcome which eS4W believes is the single most important way to empower women to be free to make their own choices and live independently.

Members include:

- Women in Adult & Vocational Education
- Australia Graduate of University Women
- Association of Women Educators
- Business and Professional Women Australia
- Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists & Managers Australia
- Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia
- International Women’s Federation of Commerce & Industry
- National Foundation for Australian Women
- Northern Territory Working Women’s Centre
- Queen Victoria Women’s Centre
- Queensland Working Women’s Service
- Women’s Information & Referral Exchange
- Working Women’s Centre South Australia
- Young Workers Advisory Service
- VIEW – Voice, Interests & Education of Women
- Waltja Tjutanku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation