



WOMEN IN ADULT AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Response to draft revised RTO Standards

The following was submitted by WAVE to the Australian Governments consultation process on the revised RTO Standards

The intent of **Quality Area 1** is to enable learners to gain industry relevant skills and knowledge. Supporting learners to achieve training outcomes (1.1), requires the trainer and the registered training organisation (RTO) to acknowledge that women do not have the same background or requirements as males, and in some cases are challenging society and cultural norms to undertake the training. To truly support women undergoing training, and assessment, trainers need training themselves on how best serve the needs of these learners who may have caring responsibilities; cultural obstacles particular to their background; survivors of abuse; and obviously a different physiology to males. In most cases, women have several characteristics that need acknowledgement in an education environment and these intersectional barriers cannot be ignored if genuine support is to be provided for women (young and old). Trainers and assessors must complete gender equity training to develop an awareness and capacity on gender issues, and incorporate these insights into the Training and Assessment Requirements for the Skill Standard being delivered. In the Guidance for training provision, the learning resources would reflect the industry expectations on gender equality and equity in learning and practice. The facilities, equipment, and resources (1.3) also require a gender lens cast over the content and the approaches adopted in the training and assessment. Questions on the assumptions and observations implicit in training material, designed to support the learner, must be posed if best practice in training and assessment is to be achieved.

Quality Area 2 focuses on learner support to ensure the learner is treated fairly and is properly informed, protected, and supported. For the support of women to be effective and appropriate for their individual needs (2.2) evidence must be provided to Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) that women of diverse backgrounds were consulted in the development of the Training and Assessment Requirement. It is not sufficient to have a suite of external organisations available to provide these support services, although it is acknowledged that some RTOs are small and do not have the capacity to provide these support services in-house (2.3). However, it must be mandatory and auditable for RTOs to provide evidence that they have consulted widely in the community in the development of the program with local women who represent the prospective users of the courses. Their 'lens' must be used on content, assessment and learner resources as part of the validation process. Feedback, complaints and appeals (2.4) can be difficult for women undergoing



training and assessment. RTOs can use existing staff or staff from the support agencies, to garner genuine concerns from female learners in the pursuit of continuous improvement and best practice quality outcomes.

Quality Area 3 focuses on the quality of the trainers and assessors, insisting on qualifications, skills and a commitment to learning and development. It is the 'commitment to learning and development' that WAVE would like to address. In particular, learning and development for trainers and assessors about the needs and support required by women as separate to the needs and support of men. Many women undertaking training and assessment will be doing so in the pursuit of an apprenticeship or traineeship qualification. Trainers and Assessors are obligated to extend the assessment of the training resources to the facilities on worksites such as supplied clothing, footwear, appropriate female facilities and restrooms and lastly, the presence of workplace bullying. The establishment of a training program must include an assessment of these barriers to women's' completion rates. Professional development for all trainers and assessors must include the skills required to recognise structural and organisation barriers for women in the workplace when they are upskilling or training, and incorporating this risk assessment into their assessment of the suitability of the workplace.

Lastly, the intent of the **standard on Engagement** is to ensure learners receive relevant skills, knowledge and support lifelong learners. Community linkages can also be used to inform training and assessment for both the trainer and the learner (4.1). Local community organisations (4.2) can be used to provide a gender lens over the training and assessment programs. Gender Equity Microcredentials can be delivered as parallel learning, supporting the development of workplace skills in gender equity for any student completing a formal qualification in any study area. In Victoria, there are six Gender Equity Microcredentials available and easily accessible. Gender equity skills are vital to building up a knowledge base in industry which will in turn build their capacity in the workforce. It is not sufficient to limit the standard on engagement to outcomes-based learning but rather to consider society's expectations on how learners use their training in the workplace, with empathy and consideration of the needs of women.

Lastly, WAVE recommend that ASQA seeks to report if not currently doing so, to Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) and ensure that their leadership and board are equitable. The ASQA Annual Report 2022 does not appear to have a gender equity plan or gender equity goals nor is there an indication of the composition of workforce by gender or whether staff are part time/full time by gender. WAVE also strongly recommend to ASQA that all future policy program and service work has a gender impact assessment applied.

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