

## **ABS submission on the May 2020 National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development Review - Interim Report (Productivity Commission)**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this review. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) would like to note that there are a couple of indicators in the report that are measured using ABS data, but there are several more mentioned that the ABS may be able to help with.

We would be very happy to discuss any of these possibilities with the Commission as required.

### **Interim Recommendations/Information Requests that could be measured using ABS Data (from page 35-48)**

#### Interim Recommendation 2.1:

*To develop improved performance measures, including:*

- *the contribution of VET to developing the foundation skills of Australians*
- *skills obtained through the VET system when students do not complete a course*
- *students' longer-term labour market outcomes*

The ABS may be able to provide data to assist with measuring these themes using data from the following surveys:

- The [Survey of Education and Work \(SEW\)](#), which provides information on Australians' participation in education, educational attainment, transitions from education to work, and apprenticeships. Topics include type of educational institution attended or attending; level and main field of education of current study, and highest level and main field of educational attainment. Information on unsuccessful enrolments and deferment of study is also included for people not currently studying;
- The [Survey of Qualifications and Work \(Q&W\)](#), which looks at characteristics of people's educational qualifications (including multiple qualifications) and their relevance to their work, as well as incomplete qualifications;
- The [Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies \(PIACC\)](#), which provides information about competencies in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills in technology-rich environments;
- The [Survey of Work-Related Training and Adult Learning \(WRTAL\)](#) provides information about participation in and barriers to formal and non-formal learning, with a particular focus on work-related training and reasons for undertaking training or not

#### Information Request - Identifying and Acting on Skills Shortages:

- *What are useful ways of defining and measuring the skills shortages relevant to the VET sector?*

The ABS has been undertaking exploratory work on skills demand and supply. We have been in conversation with stakeholders on how best we can collect and disseminate skills data now and into the future. The ABS welcomes the opportunity to work further with interested partners in this space.

#### Information Request - Pathways and Transitions

*The Commission seeks evidence on:*

- *the usefulness of VET in schools in developing work-ready skills*
- *whether there are gaps in government initiatives aimed at improving students' workplace-ready skills and, more broadly, transitions from education to employment*

The ABS may be able to provide data to assist with measuring Pathways and Transitions using various elements of the surveys above.

Information Request - Impacts of Covid-19

- What, if any, are the likely medium and long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on skill formation and the market in the VET sector?

- To the extent that some cohorts face enduring displacement from the labour market, particularly younger Australians, what role beyond current arrangements should VET play in augmenting their skill and employability?

The ABS has annual data on apprentices and school-based apprentices in their Survey of Education and Work that can be used to benchmark data from year to year and explore the difference between years. SEW data for 2020 (published 11 November 2020) will be able to show if there have been significant drops in participation in VET courses and apprenticeships this year, and look at employment outcomes for those with VET qualifications from previous years.