

28 February 2011

Dear Ms Gardener,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the Productivity Commission's *Draft Research Report – Vocational Education and Training Workforce*.

TVET commends the work undertaken so far by the Productivity Commission to understand the VET workforce. Through its Draft Research Report, the Productivity Commission has articulated a number of important issues impacting on the workforce, now and into the future. The draft findings and associated recommendations provide the beginnings of a solid base of information on which future policy decisions may be based. TVET does, however, believe that some points could be amended to better reflect and address the issues facing the VET workforce.

TVET is in a unique position to comment on issues relating to the VET workforce. Our functions and position in the sector enable us to consider the matter from multiple perspectives, including a regulatory perspective, a quality perspective, an equity perspective as well as a Training Package perspective.

TVET is a company owned by the members of the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE). In 2011, TVET's responsibilities include the provision of secretariat support services to key decision making bodies of the national training system including the National Quality Council (NQC), the Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG), and the National VET Equity Advisory Council (NVEAC).

TVET Australia is also responsible for providing the national training system with access to a range of catalogues listing quality teaching, learning and assessment resources, including nationally endorsed training packages. Through its Training Products Australia (TPA) (www.productservices.tvetaustralia.com.au) arm, TVET Australia also offers a centralised point of reference for Commonwealth and State-owned training resources, together with a comprehensive selection of materials from private publishers.

Finally, TVET Australia has responsibility for the National Audit and Registration Agency (NARA), which manages the audit and registration of multi-jurisdictional training organisations under delegation from States and Territories, until this function is subsumed by the new National VET Regulator.

TVET's response is provided below against each of the draft findings and draft recommendations. We have also provided a response to the requests for information. Our response combines the perspectives of our different functions. Where our functional areas have expressed distinct or varied views, these are separately identified.

Should you require clarification to any of the points made by TVET within our submission, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

Neil Edwards

CEO, TVET Australia

Chapter 2 The VET sector

DRAFT FINDING 2.1

The emerging tertiary sector might improve pathways and education outcomes for students, including those who experience disadvantage, but it is important that these improvements not diminish the traditional strengths of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector.

TVET Australia agrees with this draft finding. The emerging tertiary sector has the potential to enable more collaboration between the VET and higher education sectors and more pathway options for the full spectrum of learners, including those experiencing disadvantage. There is also the opportunity to promote and emphasise the vital role that VET can play in providing a pathway to work or further learning – including higher education.

Our work as secretariat to the NQC and provider of regulatory services through NARA has involved TVET in early reforms to create a tertiary education sector. Through our involvement it has become clear that some strengths of the VET sector may be at risk when they are integrated with higher education. At a preliminary level, this includes the workplace, competency-based learning model, which may be in danger of being subsumed by Higher Education's curricula-based learning model. The practical nature of VET and its close ties with industry and employment, which have been particularly successful in engaging and upskilling people who experience disadvantage, may be at risk.

Chapter 3 The VET workforce

DRAFT FINDING 3.1

The VET workforce can be characterised as follows:

- a predominance of dual professionals, with both vocational and educational skills
- older than the wider labour force, as most VET workers gain industry experience before joining the sector later in their working life
- high rates of non-permanent employment, compared to the workforce
- highly mobile, with over 80 per cent changing jobs within the sector during their career.

The intentions of many older VET workers to keep working, and the sizeable inflows of new workers into the sector, should contribute to the aggregate supply of VET workers in the short and medium term.

In addition to the characteristics identified above, TVET wishes to add a number of additional points to this draft finding.

The point relating to the supply of workers may be offset by outflows of VET workers. In particular, industry may attract increasing numbers of trainers. Some large sectors that depend on vocational skills, including mining and exploration, are projected to remain strong into the future. A global

economic recovery where the demand for skills increases will place industry in a relatively strong labour bargaining position, particularly in relation to the public training sector where employment conditions can be less lucrative. Changing employment conditions within public training providers is one way to reduce this labour drain.

Chapter 4 Government involvement in the VET sector

DRAFT FINDING 4.1

A move towards greater managerial independence for public sector VET providers is likely to better enable them to respond to the more competitive environment they now typically face. However, the adoption of a full corporate model for public sector registered training organisations (RTOs) is unlikely to be appropriate, given the number of non-commercial objectives public providers are likely to have, and the desire for governments to retain both ownership and control.

TVET concurs with this finding however wishes to note that the establishment of the NBN may significantly alter how public providers' can meet their non-commercial objectives.

DRAFT FINDING 4.2

Increased use of explicit on-budget community service obligation payments to all VET providers (to compensate for provision of non-commercial activities) has the potential to improve transparency regarding the viability of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes and other government-owned VET providers, while also improving competitive neutrality across providers.

NVEAC agrees that community service obligation payments can serve as a practical mechanism through which providers can be subsidised to deliver training for disadvantaged groups and in areas that would otherwise not be commercially viable (e.g. regional/remote/low socio-economic areas). The extent to which this funding and training delivery is 'transparent' will be reliant upon the reporting mechanisms adopted and public availability of relevant performance/outcomes information.

Chapter 6 Implications of a changing environment for the VET workforce

DRAFT FINDING 6.1

Over the medium term, in the context of a tightening labour market, the VET workforce will be expected to deliver a greater volume of training, increase the quality and breadth of its training, cater for a more diverse student population, and operate under a more contingent and contestable funding system.

TVET agrees that the VET workforce faces new and different demands moving to the future, however, wishes to highlight other significant changes in the operating context that will play a significant role in shaping the future environment.

TVET notes that the workforce is likely to be impacted by the rollout of the NBN, which itself will require changing skills as it progresses through its construction stage and will generate changes in the skills that industry demands as businesses change their operating models to take advantage of

the technology. Options for improving the delivery of training and optimising learner experiences will also be facilitated by the NBN, which will demand a certain level of technological fluency from VET practitioners.

In addition, the establishment of a tertiary sector that integrates VET and higher education presents a very different environment for the VET workforce. Changes in the regulation of providers and increasing numbers of larger dual-sector providers will demand different skills from the VET Workforce. Further work is required to fully understand the opportunities and challenges linked to these changes.

Chapter 7 Ensuring workforce capacity and efficiency

DRAFT FINDING 7.1

Consistent national data about the size and characteristics of the VET workforce are lacking. Many administrative collections exist, at both the provider and jurisdictional level, but they are incomplete, disparate and not widely used or disseminated. Lack of quality data is an obstacle to effective policy making and workforce planning at any level, and to efforts to improve the capacity and capability of the workforce.

TVET agrees with this draft finding. The lack of quality data is a critical issue for the VET sector, which requires early resolution. At present a number of projects are underway to further understand the gaps in information and how they may be bridged. In addition to those mentioned in the Draft Research Report are the review of AVETMISS to determine whether the collection should be broadened as well as the review of RTO Quality Indicators. It is important that these separate pieces of work are not completed in isolation of each other. With significant amounts of public funds being invested to address this issue, it is important that a single comprehensive outcome/solution be arrived at. The more accurate, current and comprehensive our understanding is of the VET workforce, the more we will be able to support it during integration with the higher education workforce.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 7.1

The Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment should engage the National Centre for Vocational Education Research to develop a comprehensive instrument with which to identify the VET workforce as soon as practicable. This instrument should focus on measuring and describing the workforce, but not unduly increase the response burden for providers.

TVET supports this recommendation provided the burden of data collected is proportionate to the benefits enabled by its collection. To minimise the burden for providers, TVET supports information on the VET workforce being collected as part of an existing collection. To the greatest extent possible collections should be consolidated. In addition, reporting mechanisms should minimise the time and administration required to collect and report data. While it may require a higher initial outlay, a reporting mechanism that is mostly automated, electronic and linked to relevant data repositories will reap longer term gains and lessen provider opposition to the collection.

Data Provision Requirements are to become a legislative instrument under the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Bill 2010, currently before federal parliament. “Consideration

might need to be given to mandating data provision as a condition of registration as an RTO” (pg7.10). TVET agrees with this statement from the draft Research Report and recommends that data collection relating to the VET workforce be included within the legislative instrument.

Please note that FLAG has also addressed this issue within its own submission.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 7.2

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research should consider the information required to allow the critical determinants of quality teaching to be investigated quantitatively, and consider the best means of capturing student and industry satisfaction with the VET workforce.

TVET notes that the Quality Indicators for RTOs are currently under review. The Quality Indicators involve an employer survey and a learner survey as well as records of competency completion. Both the learner and employer surveys collect information on satisfaction with the training/assessment provided, including the quality of teaching. In relation to the domain of Training Quality within the learner survey, learners are asked for their feedback on: Trainer Quality; Overall Satisfaction; Effective Assessment; Clear Expectations; and Learning Stimulation. There may be scope to utilise these surveys to gain the required indication of industry and student satisfaction with the VET workforce. This is one means of consolidating collections to reduce the administrative burden for providers.

Where these surveys are utilised it will be important that further rigour is applied to their implementation. At present RTOs are responsible for undertaking the survey, including identifying the sample to be surveyed, how the survey is administered and how the data collected is recorded. This arrangement leaves much room for incomplete, inaccurate and inconsistent data to be collected, including, at worst, for the fabrication of survey responses. Future arrangements will need to mitigate against this.

Furthermore, Quality Indicator Data is only made available to registering bodies, not to the public. Whilst protecting and respecting confidentiality and privacy tenets, information on satisfaction with the VET workforce should be made public at some aggregated level to encourage practitioners to improve and for providers to support them.

DRAFT FINDING 7.2

Wage structures in the TAFE sector take no account of the relative scarcity of industry skills being sought. As a consequence, TAFE can find it difficult to attract and retain some VET trainers and assessors with particular industry skills without resorting to over award payments, while other VET trainers and assessors may be paid more than is necessary to recruit and retain them as trainers and assessors.

TVET concurs that this is a barrier to the appropriate allocation of labour, which costs the sector in misplaced human and financial resources.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 7.3

State and Territory governments should not have jurisdiction-wide industrial agreements for the TAFE sector. Current arrangements include caps on the use of casual staff, are prescriptive on hours to be worked in TAFE and encourage uniform wages and conditions. These have the effect of limiting the ability of TAFEs to respond quickly to changes in demand and disadvantage them relative to private RTOs. TAFE institutes should be able to select the mix of employment arrangements, supported by contemporary human resource management practices, that best suits their business goals.

TVET supports this draft recommendation. The market economy encourages improved performance through competition. Without exposure to market forces, public providers are unlikely to offer an optimal training and assessment service to students. Existing wage and employment arrangements for the TAFE sector lead to difficulty in attracting the right number of people at the right level at the right time. Existing arrangements tie money up in functions that are no longer required and often leave the institution without the necessary funds to invest in areas of demand. Allowing some level of market penetration can only lead to raised teacher quality. As discussed previously in this response, the NBN and the integration of VET and higher education may generate a range of competitive drivers for the TAFE sector, including greater numbers of dual TAFE/university model.

Chapter 8 Ensuring workforce capability

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 8.1

The Certificate IV in Training and Education (TAE40110) should maintain its status as a high risk qualification. Auditing by state and territory regulators of RTOs with this qualification on their scope needs to be more frequent and more intensive.

Different views exist across the sector in respect of risk rating qualifications. As is stated in its submission, the NQC notes that at present there is no nationally consistent approach to defining the risk profile of qualifications/courses and requests that this recommendation be amended. Some registering bodies recognise qualifications as high risk, while others do not. The NQC advocates for the development of a nationally consistent approach to defining the risk profile of courses/qualifications according to relevant criteria.

NARA is of the view that formally risk rating qualifications and courses may be problematic. It feels that no qualification in and of its self makes an RTO 'high risk', rather that the qualifications are one indicator of risk, which are considered against the RTO's performance in relation to all other indicators of risk. This is the current approach stipulated in the AQTF National Guideline for Risk Management. In establishing the National VET Regulator, which will set 'Requirements' for risk assessment, NARA recommends that the approach in the AQTF Guidelines is built on through the application of weightings to indicators of risk. This may see the 'scope of registration' (an indicator of risk), including provision of the TAE, receiving a heavier weighting and therefore contributing more so than other risk indicators to the overall risk rating.

With regard to the recommendation to alter regulatory arrangements for RTOs with this qualification on scope, the NQC Quality of Assessment Action Group is presently in the second stage of its National Strategic Industry Audit of TAA40104 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Stage 2 work includes the development of an Action Plan which proposes actions to be taken in the short, medium and long term to address the significant compliance issues identified in Stage 1 of this project. The NQC is of the view that issues identified in Stage 1 of the work are likely to apply equally to TAE40110. As is stated in its submission, the NQC does not agree that more frequent or more intensive regulation of RTOs with this qualification on scope would rectify these issues but may form part of a national risk management approach.

Instead of more frequent and intensive auditing of RTOs with the TAE on scope, NARA supports consideration being given to prescribing specific curricula and implementation rules to sit alongside the TAE Training Package. This may assist in the establishment of clearer and more concise performance benchmarks for participants and reduce the difference in the quality of delivery and assessment, and therefore student outcomes, currently found across providers.

TVET also encourages higher quality delivery of the TAE through public accountability of performance, training and communication of good practice. These 'positive' approaches are as important as strengthening regulation.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 8.2

State and territory regulators should publish information on audit outcomes and performance indicators for RTOs, to further incentivise providers to focus on quality training and assessment.

TVET supports this recommendation with the qualification that information published must have a public good value and not be disproportionate in the administrative burden its generates. Currently information on audit outcomes and performance is collected through regulators' risk assessment processes and RTO Quality Indicators. It may be appropriate to publish elements of this information, provided it is sufficiently aggregated to prevent breaches of privacy and confidentiality. TVET also stipulates that the publishing entity must be appropriately protected in undertaking this function. It is unclear whether this is possible and what kind of legal protections would need to be in place for the entity making such information publically available.

In its Equity Blueprint, NVEAC strongly advocates the development of an outcomes framework and performance measures to track progress and achievements for disadvantaged learners. Performance against these measures should be published.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 8.3

Industry and Business Skills Australia should amend the Evidence Guide for TAEDEL401A to require those seeking to demonstrate competence at the Certificate IV level to prepare and deliver at least

four consecutive supervised training sessions. An assessor from outside an RTO delivering the unit should evaluate a student's competence through observation of two of these sessions.

The introduction of external assessment is currently being debated across the sector. It is seen by many as a way of raising the quality and consistency of assessment. However, there may be a number of issues that should be carefully considered in deciding whether this will achieve the desired outcome in a cost effective way.

The NQC has identified consideration of external assessment as an emerging issue within its 2011 Work Plan.

Issues for consideration may include:

- Undermining compliance with the AQTF: altering assessment of students risks undermining the registration afforded to providers through compliance with the AQTF Standards. The interaction between the levers of quality, including the AQTF and Training Package Evidence Guides, should be further considered.*
- Cost: who will bear the cost of this additional compliance requirement?*
- Competence of the external assessor: where an external assessor is used to raise the quality and consistency of assessment, the competence of the external assessor will need to be assured. It is unclear how this will be done and the nature of moderation that may be required.*
- Management and verification: consideration will need to be given to how arrangements with the external assessor can be verified and managed and whether they will be subject to regulatory examination at audit.*

DRAFT FINDING 8.1

On balance, the Commission concludes that the Certificate IV, when well taught, is an appropriate qualification for the development of essential foundation competencies for VET practitioners.

TVET agrees that when followed and well taught, the Training Package for the Certificate IV is appropriate in developing the essential foundation competencies of VET practitioners.

In general the Certificate IV represents a satisfactory minimum qualification, not the totality of skills and knowledge required to practice effectively in VET. However, whether the qualification represents satisfactory minimum skills and knowledge to meet the distinct needs of individuals experiencing disadvantage requires further investigation. The qualification should be used as a basis on which to build more sophisticated training and assessment competencies.

The findings of NQC work as well as NARA's experience as a regulator, suggests that many providers 'cut corners' in their delivery of the qualification. Competitive market pressure coupled with the competency-based model has the effect of driving delivery times and invested resources down.

Without effective and consistent assessment of outcomes, which the competency-based model relies upon, the quality of the training will continue to be variable.

NVEAC does not wholly support this draft finding. NVEAC argues that the Certificate IV TAA or TAE does not adequately prepare VET instructors/teachers to support the needs of the disadvantaged learners. This position is taken based on feedback received by NVEAC during stakeholder consultations.

DRAFT FINDING 8.2

Many people actively engaged in the VET sector as trainers and assessors do not have the necessary minimum educational qualification of the Certificate IV in TAE or an equivalent qualification.

In NARA's regulatory experience, specifically in determining compliance against AQTF Standard 1.4, a significant number of trainers and assessors do not possess the necessary vocational skills (in this case VET sector skills). It is important to note that compliance with Standard 1.4 does not require trainers and assessors to have specific qualifications, rather they are to have specific skills. Therefore the finding is slightly misleading. It does, however, go to a question at the core of the VET model, which is the value of the qualification as currency and how it compares to 'deemed equivalence' of competence.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 8.4

Within two years of commencing employment, VET practitioners should have completed the Certificate IV from TAE10. Industry experts, working under supervision, should be encouraged but not required to obtain a Certificate IV in TAE. Within two years of commencing delivery of training or assessment, enterprise trainers and assessors working under the supervision of someone with the Certificate IV, should have completed the Skill Set relevant to their role.

In its Determination of 17 June 2010, the NQC provides a two year period by which time trainers and assessors already in the workforce must either hold TAE40110 or be able to demonstrate equivalent competencies.

It is NARA's view that this draft recommendation is sound in that it distinguishes between the different circumstances of trainers and assessors working across the sector. In particular, it takes account of the cost of requiring the entire workforce to gain a qualification.

NARA is also of the view that the draft recommendation is sound in that it applies the qualification requirement to new workforce entrants, which avoids the costs associated with existing workers needing to gain a qualification. It also establishes a solid skill foundation for the future VET workforce.

Additionally, the draft recommendation to require trainers and assessors working under supervision to complete relevant Skill Sets is considered appropriate by NARA. In many instances, only a small number of Skill Sets are relevant to the skill needs of the enterprise trainer/assessor. Mandating only the relevant Skill Sets represents a better use of resources and time and is more in-line with a core value of the sector – that it's not about 'the piece of paper'.

Regarding the timeframe (two years proposed), there may be challenges in monitoring exactly how long an individual is working in the sector. As is evidenced in the Draft Research Report, the VET workforce is characterised by a relatively higher proportion of casual and part-time workers. Workers move in and out of the sector, between industry and training, relatively more frequently. Determining when the ‘two years’ is completed, may therefore, be challenging.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 8.5

In order to improve delivery to Indigenous VET students, VET providers should attempt to secure the services of more Indigenous VET workers. Possible strategies include ensuring the presence of Indigenous staff members on recruitment panels and charging an Indigenous HR manager with attracting, coordinating and retaining Indigenous employees across their organisation. Recognising that it is difficult for VET to attract skilled Indigenous VET workers who are also being sought by industry, the VET sector should also put in place strategies to support Indigenous students to complete their studies within the VET sector.

NVEAC supports this Draft Recommendation. In order for it to be achievable, as a first step, the latter part of the recommendation needs to be actioned. More skilled Indigenous VET workers need to be available to satisfy the need for Indigenous involvement necessary to raise the level and quality of Indigenous student participation. While the recommendation begins with a focus on attracting workers from an existing pool of labour, it should rather focus on growing the Indigenous VET workforce pool. This may be through targeted initiatives with training providers and with industry to formally recognise existing skills of Indigenous workers and to provide opportunities for employment to raise industry-relevant knowledge. Furthermore, the NQC suggests that the recommendation is strengthened through the specification of a strategy that supports completion of training by Indigenous students.

The suggestion to have Indigenous representation on recruitment panels and drives to specifically attract Indigenous workers risks being used in a “quota or target” fashion. This can occur at the expense of recruiting based on merit and does not necessarily achieve the desired aims.

DRAFT FINDING 8.3

Considering the educational capabilities of the VET workforce:

It is TVET’s overall view given the earlier finding that there is a lack of quality data relating to the sector, its workforce and capability, it appears definitive statements on capability gaps are somewhat premature. It is suggested that the below areas be targeted in the recommended data collection exercise to determine the validity of the claims.

- There is little evidence of the VET workforce currently having capability gaps in delivering training and assessment to students who may experience disadvantage. However, this is an area of considerable exposure for the VET sector in the future, with an ageing workforce and an anticipated increase in VET delivery to disadvantaged students.
 - *NVEAC strongly questions this finding. During the extensive consultations that it undertook to develop the Equity Blueprint, stakeholders consistently emphasised a*

need to raise skill capacity and capability in the VET workforce – particularly with regard to supporting the needs of disadvantaged learners. A gap was identified in the skills of trainers as well as the skills of auditors who often lack the ability to identify good or bad practice in relation to disadvantaged learners at audit.

- There is tentative evidence of capability gaps relating to delivery of higher level qualifications.
 - *The NQC has identified this as a priority for capability building within the VET workforce. See its submission for further information.*
- There is evidence of a significant capability gap in ICT skills among the VET workforce.
 - *TVET is aware that the VET workforce may not currently possess a level of technological proficiency enabling it to take full advantage of emerging technologies, including the NBN, and associated changes in business practice. A lack of ICT capability across the VET workforce, including that held by auditors, is also an issue for the quality of training and assessment that is delivered online. A separate submission from FLAG also addresses the draft finding.*
 - There is evidence of a capability gap in the ability of some VET practitioners and enterprise trainers and assessors to assess RPL and RCC. *Taking into account the overall comment above, NARA submits the following for consideration:*
 - *Through its regulatory experience, NARA has found a broader capability gap across all types of assessment. Analysis of its RTO audit results identifies assessment as a major area of non-compliance.*
 - *See comments relating to Draft Recommendation 8.3. The issue may also be a standards/audit issue.*
 - *This issue may be linked to the currency of skills. Assuming a trainer/assessor has completed the full TAA/TAE, many trainer/assessor roles do not require regular implementation of the full range of skills from the course. Therefore, when a relatively uncommon event (such as an RPL assessment) arises, the lack of currency shows as the capability gap. A possible solution may be refresher training on a regular basis, similar to First Aid training. It may also be broken into Skills Sets (development, delivery, assessment, review/validation etc).*
- There is evidence of capability gaps among VET managers and leaders.

In addition, based on research undertaken by the NQC, TVET submits that there may be capability gaps in relation to working within workplaces and forming and maintaining effective partnerships with enterprises.

DRAFT FINDING 8.4

Industry currency is not well-researched or understood. While currency is often equated with industry release, or work in industry, maintenance of currency can occur through a variety of activities. There is evidence of currency gaps in the current workforce, particularly among those who have worked full time in the VET sector for more than 10 years. Continuing professional development systems need to identify and address these gaps.

At present, currency means different things to different entities (RTOs, regulators, industry) at different times, within different industry areas and across the various sectors. Gaining a common understanding of how currency can be effectively assessed and evidenced is critical to gaining a better understanding of the currency issue. The NQC has undertaken work to address this matter, which is detailed in its submission. This includes additional text to clarify what is meant by the vocational competence of trainers and assessors.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 8.6

State and Territory governments should assess the adequacy of funding provisions for ongoing professional development of their VET workforce. Nongovernment RTOs should identify capability needs within their workforces and target funding accordingly. Professional development should be a joint responsibility of RTO employers/owners and employees. Industry and Business Skills Australia should consult with the sector and develop options for ongoing professional development that address competency gaps and/or contribute to further capability development.

See comments above relating to the need to collect appropriate data on capability gaps. This is necessary to enable a discussion around appropriately targeted funding for ongoing Professional Development activity.

With the Certificate IV TAE considered able to provide appropriate entry-level skills, identifying what ongoing professional development is needed is critical. This could be achieved through a national VET workforce development plan. Refer to the submission by the NQC for further detail on such a plan. The National Standards Council (NSC), in conjunction with States and Territories, may be appropriately placed to lead this work.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION 8.7

Governments should not endorse or contribute funding to a registration scheme for VET trainers and assessors.

TVET does not wholly support this draft recommendation. The efficacy of registration schemes in supporting appropriate professional development for VET trainers and assessors requires further analysis.

In a study commissioned by the NQC and released in June 2010, CARROTS, STICKS, A MIX, OR OTHER OPTIONS, it was found that a ‘carrot’ registration scheme would complement the existing ‘stick’ regulatory arrangements in supporting the quality of VET trainers and assessors.

The report found that voluntary schemes work well for some individuals, while compulsory registration schemes work well for others. Specifically, regulatory policies serve well the attainment of foundation skills. However, regulatory policies are not as effective in encouraging specialist and advanced skills amongst VET practitioners. Conversely, developmental policies are not effective in encouraging foundation skills, but are quite effective in encouraging specialist and advanced skills.

“Key findings from this systematic approach include that humanistic approaches (e.g. providing opportunities for professional development) and behavioural approaches (e.g. excellence awards) to recognition and reward have the greatest potential to impact positively upon capability building within the VET sector. The two approaches can be used together.

Regulatory registration policies have the potential to impact positively upon capability development in the foundation and specialist skills areas. Developmental registration policies have the potential to impact positively upon specialist and advanced skills areas.”¹

The report made the following recommendations:

“...only two of the four categories of recognition and rewards schemes are generally suitable for capability building in VET. They are the humanistic approach and the behavioural approach...

Recommendation 3: That NQC recommend to the States and Territories that the humanistic approach to recognition and rewards schemes – such as creating opportunities for professional development, providing access to industry networking and providing access to coaching and mentoring programs – be used for capability building of specialist and advanced skills, including technical and industry competence, with a particular emphasis upon the advanced skills.

Recommendation 4: That NQC recommend to the States and Territories that, given the popularity and respect for industry networking opportunities for capability building, including technical and industry competence, industry networking as a humanistic approach be a priority strategy for VET trainers and assessors with specialist and advanced skills.

Recommendation 5: That NQC recommend to the States and Territories that the behavioural approach to recognition and reward schemes – such as public awards – be used for capability building of foundation and specialist skills and related industry and technical competence.”²

Information requests

¹ NQC (2010) CARROTS, STICKS, A MIX, OR OTHER OPTIONS. Pg 10

² NQC (2010). CARROTS, STICKS, A MIX, OR OTHER OPTIONS. Pg11

Are VET providers (public or private) compensated for pursuing non-commercial objectives requested by governments? If so, does the level of compensation accurately reflect additional costs? What form does this compensation take? Is it transparently identified in government budget documentation and as income by providers?

NVEAC believes that current VET funding mechanisms do not accommodate the true costs of supporting the special needs of disadvantaged learners. NVEAC considers that there is critical need for a sustainable equity investment model in VET that reflects the real cost of providing the full range of support services and resources required to lift educational and employment outcomes for disadvantaged learners. As such, this is the first area of reform identified in the Equity Blueprint.

The Commission seeks further input on whether VET-in-Schools teachers should be required to have the Certificate IV in Training and Education.

It is NARA's view that the deemed equivalence requirement works well for VET-in-Schools teachers. Widely regarded as holding good facilitation skills, it does not appear necessary to mandate teachers to obtain this qualification. There is however a need for teachers to be able to demonstrate skills and knowledge in the VET sector. Meeting the requirements of AQTF element 1.4 is a better mechanism to ensure the capability of VET-in-Schools teachers. The NQC does not support this view.

The Commission seeks further input on the effects of the introduction of the modern award on industrial relations settings and performance incentives in private VET providers.

The Commission seeks further information on any quantitative studies, with a focus on Australia, that seek to identify the relationship between the characteristics of trainers and assessors with the quality of student outcomes.

The Commission seeks information on the ability of RTOs delivering the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment to significantly increase their scale of delivery while also improving quality and compliance. It would also welcome information on the ability of state and territory regulators to more intensively audit and enforce compliance in the event of an increase in the number of RTOs delivering the Certificate IV. Finally, the Commission seeks views on the appropriateness of increasing from two to five years the transition period during which existing VET practitioners should be required to gain a full Certificate IV.

A comment is provided earlier in the paper in relation to additional regulation of TAA/TAE providers.

The Commission seeks input in the form of quantitative evidence on the relationship between teacher qualifications and teaching quality by level of qualification.

The Commission would welcome information on the additional knowledge and skills required by VET practitioners delivering within workplaces, and evidence on whether or not the workforce has adequate capability in this area