

COAG Industry and Skills Council Meeting, Skills Ministers, 18 November 2016

The skills session of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Industry and Skills Council met in Darwin on 18 November 2016. The session was chaired by the Hon Karen Andrews MP, Australian Government Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills. State and Territory Ministers with portfolio responsibilities for skills attended the meeting. Apologies were received from the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Western Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and New Zealand.

As a result of late changes to attendance, a quorum was not reached, and therefore under the Council's terms of reference, no formal decisions could be made. Out of session decisions were reached on the following items.

Lifting Quality

The Council agreed to a number of actions and received reports from the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) and the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC).

RTO regulation

The Council noted the recent changes by ASQA to its regulatory practice and its continued development of the risk-based approach to regulation.

The Council endorsed amendments to the Standards for VET Regulators and changes to the National VET Regulator Regulations, and will take appropriate action to implement the changes. The Council also supported further exploration into regulatory reforms including enhancing transparency and increasing the ability for proportionate responses to non-compliance.

Assessment

The Council agreed to progress the recommendations from the Training and Assessment Working Group's *Improving the quality of assessment in vocational education and training* report, and noted the report will be made publicly available. The Council requested the AISC undertake further work on the Training and Education Training Package and agreed to progress consideration of assessment validation and professional development as well as other issues recommended by the Working Group through senior officials. Senior officials will advise on progression and further assessment reform priorities in 2017.

Training packages - updating and reform

Nine training packages considered by the AISC since April 2016 were endorsed by Council.

The AISC has made early progress in implementing the five reforms to training packages that were agreed in November 2015, including strengthening training package development and endorsement processes. Good progress has been made including an overall reduction in the number of training packages and qualifications on the national register and an increase in the number of skill sets to enable people to reskill and upskill quickly by undertaking an additional specialised skill set.

Ministers noted progress with the review of Standards for VET Accredited Courses to ensure alignment with Standards for Training Packages, with consideration of the final report and implementation expected in early 2017.

Looking further ahead, the Council agreed to continue to examine and develop the case for enhancements to the design of qualifications and courses, in partnership with industry and in consultation with the broader VET sector, taking into account the current model and other work underway.

National Standards for Group Training Organisations

The Council endorsed the revised National Standards for Group Training Organisations (GTOs).

National Training Complaints Hotline operational protocol

The Council also agreed to the National Training Complaints Hotline operational protocol.

Improving Outcomes

Improving outcomes from training and ensuring students gain skills needed for employment is an overarching objective.

Australian Apprenticeships

The Council noted the strong track record of collaborative reform to improve the Australian Apprenticeships system and progress towards harmonisation of apprenticeship and traineeship durations.

The Council discussed ongoing issues around commencement and completion rates and noted the specific issues varied between jurisdictions.

Senior officials have been tasked with following up on issues raised in the meeting, particularly in relation to:

- opportunities to improve apprenticeship support service arrangements
- potential enhancements to pre-apprenticeship arrangements and pathways to apprenticeship training
- strategies to improve the status of apprenticeships amongst employers and potential apprentices and trainees.

General System Harmonisation

Progress has been made in several areas of harmonisation where there is immediate value for all jurisdictions such as in information sharing and aligning of contract requirements for brokers and sub-contractors.

Improving Data

The Council noted the significant progress made in improving data and the provision of information for consumers, including collecting training information from all RTOs through Total Vet Activity and the introduction of the Unique Student Identifier. Council agreed to the Performance Information for VET (PIVET) concept and the high level roadmap to transform the data available to consumers, governments and regulators over the next three years through the creation of a RTO Performance Dashboard for consumers and an integrated virtual Data Platform for governments, noting the

authority to proceed on projects will be sought from ministers and/or skills senior officials, as required.

Skills Reform

The Chair acknowledged the progress made by states and territories under the current National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform.

Australian Government senior officials were directed to commence discussions with jurisdictions and report back on key priorities for reform.

Chief Commissioner of ASQA

Members of the Council acknowledged the leadership and commitment of the outgoing Chief Commissioner and CEO of ASQA, Mr Chris Robinson, and wished him well in his new endeavours.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Council will be held on a date and at a location to be determined in collaboration with industry ministers of the Council, if practicable.