VET Workforce Blueprint Scope

The vocational education and training (VET) workforce is a vital component of Australia's VET sector, and in 2021 was responsible for skilling and upskilling 4.3 million learners[1]. Like many industries across Australia, the VET sector is under increasing pressure to attract and retain a skilled workforce. There are demographic challenges in the VET workforce, and at the same time skills shortages are being experienced more widely across the economy. In turn, industry and employers are increasingly looking to the VET system to address their own skills shortages, which has created a substantial set of further pressures on the VET workforce. Additionally, recent research and stakeholder feedback shows there is a need to build and support the skills and capability of the existing VET workforce, particularly early career VET practitioners.

Work has previously been undertaken by the Commonwealth, in conjunction with the states and territories, to examine the quality and capability of the existing VET workforce through the development of a draft VET Workforce Quality Strategy. More recently, it has become increasingly apparent that any successful action taken to improve the quality and capability of the workforce should consider the context of broader workforce issues. To this end, a comprehensive Blueprint will be developed, to support and grow a quality VET workforce, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the VET sector. The Blueprint presents the opportunity to take a broader framing, while still considering and incorporating feedback and proposed actions developed as part of the draft Quality Strategy. The Blueprint will be developed in close consultation with key VET stakeholders and will identify effective strategies for:

- **Growing and diversifying the workforce** – projecting workforce supply and demand, including regional distribution, the shortage of specialist roles and encouraging workforce diversity.

- **Attraction** – how to attract a high-quality VET workforce, including industry-experienced professionals, dual professionals and adult educators, as well as examining the barriers in place for entry to the VET workforce, and avenues to promote becoming a VET practitioner.

- **Retention** – identifying effective retention strategies, including examining the barriers to retention.

- **Capability and career development** – mapping career pathways and strategies to support career development and career progression, including support for building capability for a high-quality VET workforce, noting the diverse range of registered training organisations (RTOs) in the sector as well as the dynamic nature of employment in the VET workforce and the range of potential entry and exit points.

- **Succession planning** – support for the sector in the context of an ageing workforce, including methods to provide, and improve, continued opportunities for experienced industry professionals to enter and move between the VET workforce as a second or co-career, and potential changes in labour market needs.

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[1] NCVER (2022) *Total VET students and courses 2021 statistical report*

There will be concurrent phases to the development of the Blueprint to identify immediate, medium, and longer-term solutions to the pressures facing the VET workforce. The initial phase will identify early actions to provide immediate relief, while more work on the comprehensive Blueprint is being undertaken to address the longer-term sustainability of the VET workforce.

As well as identifying immediate actions to help alleviate pressures on the VET workforce, work to be undertaken as part of the initial phase of the Blueprint will include commencing the development of a robust data and evidence base for the VET workforce, drawing on national data and analysis, as well as other relevant State and Territory data sources. This work will identify current issues, trends and projections for the VET workforce. It will help inform the development of the Blueprint including the preparation of a VET workforce profile. This profiling work will help prioritise efforts around areas of the VET workforce under the most acute pressure, noting the VET workforce includes teachers, trainers and assessors, as well as a range of professional and administrative staff who support the activities of a registered training organisations.

This initial phase of work will also examine examples of effective and innovative practices in jurisdictions and how these could be scaled up or replicated across the broader VET sector. Consideration will also be given to the federal and state levers that could be used to impact meaningful change to address the challenges being experienced by the VET workforce. International best practice in the recruitment and attraction of a high-quality VET workforce will also be examined.

Over the longer term, the development of the Blueprint will draw upon and incorporate the learnings from the initial phase of work, and will include analysis and consideration of:

- current workforce supply and demand, including qualification coverage, specialist roles and regional and remote distribution

- current effective attraction and retention strategies being employed in the sector, and the identification of possible barriers which may exist

- strategies to encourage diversity and equity of the VET workforce

- the dynamic nature of trainer and assessor employment, and the movement of employment between RTOs and industry

- workforce capability to support strong learner outcomes and high-quality education and training delivery, including the role of VET teachers, trainers and assessors in meeting the changing needs of learners

- career pathways and career progression through to RTO leadership roles

- projected workforce supply and demand (short, medium, and long term)

- how skilled migration may contribute to the sustainability of the workforce in the short and long term

- how to leverage the ageing workforce across the economy for the benefit of the VET workforce

- skilling the future VET workforce, including the role of entry qualifications and upskilling the existing VET workforce

- the interaction between the Standards for RTOs and the impact this has on the VET workforce

- the diverse nature of RTOs across the VET sector and the impact of this on the VET workforce, including TAFEs, private and independent RTOs, dual sector institutions, enterprise RTOs, RTOs with a volunteer workforce, community-based RTOs, Aboriginal Community Controlled RTOs, and RTOs delivering training to senior secondary students, as well as consideration of the varied breadth and types of qualifications offered between different RTO types

- the impact of potential changes in labour market needs

- possible interactions with workforce strategies in other education sectors, such as the early childhood education and schooling sectors

- potential linkages with the Foundation Skills Framework

- examining the important role of industry as part of the VET workforce, including employers/supervisors involved in on-the-job training, particularly for apprentices and trainees, as well as the role of industry currency and maintaining connections between RTOs and industry.

These issues will not only be considered in the context of the current system, but also in light of developing solutions to harness new ways of doing things.

National roundtable discussions will be held with key VET stakeholders to inform the development of the Blueprint. Engagement with industry will be a central part of the response, and will play a critical role in supporting the longevity of the VET workforce. Given the size and diversity of the VET workforce, additional opportunities for broad workforce engagement will be held through an online submission process to further assist the development of the Blueprint.