



## Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council

**The Hon Brendan O'Connor MP**  
Minister for Skills and Training

**The Hon Steve Whan MP**  
**New South Wales**  
Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education

**The Hon Joel Bowden MLA**  
**Northern Territory**  
Minister for Skills, Training and International Education

**The Hon Lance McCallum MP**  
**Queensland**  
Minister for Training and Skills Development

**The Hon Blair Boyer MP**  
**South Australia**  
Minister for Education, Training and Skills

**The Hon Gayle Tierney MLC**  
**Victoria**  
Minister for Skills and TAFE

**The Hon Simone McGurk MLA**  
**Western Australia**  
Minister for Training and Workforce Development

*Senior officials observed the meeting for the Australian Capital Territory  
and the Tasmanian Governments*

# COMMUNIQUE

## MEETING OF FEDERAL, STATE AND TERRITORY SKILLS MINISTERS

Federal, State and Territory Skills and Training Ministers met virtually today to discuss ongoing reform of vocational education and training (VET) through important changes to address the quality and industry relevance of training, the integrity of providers, and the strengthening of the sector.

### Housing supply national priority

Skills Ministers agreed that delivering housing supply will be added to the national priorities identified in the National Skills Agreement. Skills Ministers recognise that focused effort of all governments is required to address critical skills and workforce shortages to meet the goals of the Housing Accord and plans underway in each State and Territory. In meeting this need Skills Ministers will consider planning and construction skills. Skills Ministers will liaise closely with Housing and Homelessness Ministers in delivering this work.

### Review of Apprenticeship Incentive System

The Commonwealth is undertaking a strategic review of the Australian Apprenticeship Incentive System with a focus on helping more people start and complete apprenticeships and traineeships. The review will be underpinned by broad consultation with stakeholders and will assist the government to implement a more effective, sustainable, and long-term incentive system for apprentices and trainees. The review will focus on gender equality and increasing the diversity of apprentices in traditionally male dominated trades.

Skills Ministers were joined by reviewers, the Honourable Iain Ross AO and Ms Lisa Paul AO PSM, to discuss the approach and scope of the review. Skills Ministers were assured that the review would include a focus on the proliferation of wage subsidies in areas that have not mitigated current skill shortages and committed to participating in the review and contributing their insights.

Information on the review can be found on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' [website](#). Written submissions will also be invited throughout the review process via the [Consultation Hub](#).

### Quality in VET

Skills Ministers noted progress on a range of measures to strengthen quality and integrity within the VET sector, including changes to the current Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) which commenced on 1 March 2024, development of a VET Workforce Blueprint, and work underway to implement a range of integrity measures to strengthen the regulatory tools to remove non-genuine and unscrupulous providers. This includes the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Amendment (Strengthening Quality and Integrity in Vocational Education and Training No.1) Bill 2024, which was introduced to Federal Parliament on 7 February 2024.

Skills Ministers discussed the significant body of work currently underway in collaboration with States and Territories and VET regulators to enable the revised Standards for RTOs to take effect from January 2025 and discussed the need for these reforms to recognise the role of TAFE as the trusted provider at the centre of the VET system.

## Qualifications Reform

Skills Ministers discussed the critical importance of reforming Australia's VET qualification system, acknowledging that while current qualification design continues to meet the needs of some industry sectors, change is needed for other sectors. The labour market is changing, and our VET qualification system needs to be responsive, agile and flexible to address the significant skills shortages facing our economy. Skills Ministers received initial advice from the tripartite Qualification Reform Design Group on how this could be achieved.

Drawing on their extensive expertise and lived experience of industry and training providers, the Design Group has concluded the current one-size-fits-all approach to qualification design is not meeting the increasingly complex needs of qualification users across the economy. It is important that any reform preserves the strengths of the VET sector and supports safety and quality in training outcomes while providing opportunities for new approaches for sectors that need them.

Skills Ministers received a briefing from the Chair of the Design Group, Mr Craig Robertson, and accepted the Design Group's advice on a proposed approach to qualification reform that recognises the different purposes for which qualifications are utilised and have agreed that Jobs and Skills Councils should be invited to road-test the proposed approach and work with the Design Group and States and Territories to provide further advice to Ministers by the end of 2024.

Information on the report can be found on the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' [website](#).

## National Skills Agreement – National Skills Plan, outcomes framework

Skills Ministers agreed to the proposed approach for developing an outcomes framework for the 5-year National Skills Agreement, including a balanced scorecard and dashboard to support Skills Ministers with decision-making, priority setting and the development of a National Skills Plan.

The outcomes framework is the first of its kind for the VET sector and will help to ensure maximum benefit from shared skills investment. Understanding what success looks like will be critical to ensuring a responsive and accessible national VET sector that delivers skills needs and supports national priorities. This approach will improve transparency and support ongoing meaningful tripartite collaboration and partnerships across jurisdictions.

Senior Officials from each jurisdiction will engage with key stakeholders on the National Skills Plan, in particular First Nations groups, to inform Skills Ministers' consideration at the May 2024 Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council meeting.

## Australian Universities Accord Report

Skills Ministers reflected on the Universities Accord report and agreed to discuss the Accord and the opportunities for VET at a future meeting in April 2024.

**FRIDAY, 8 MARCH 2024**

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