
Communiqué for the COAG Skills Council Meeting

22 November 2019

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Skills Council (the Council) held its second meeting today in Brisbane to agree on an ambitious approach to enhancing vocational education and training (VET).

Council congratulated the winners and finalists recognised at the Australian Training Awards on their outstanding achievements. The winners and finalists offer a shining example of the transformational opportunities offered by VET.

Delivering a COAG VET Reform Roadmap for a responsive, dynamic and trusted VET sector.

Council discussed a draft COAG VET Reform Roadmap that will deliver reforms to ensure Australia's future is one where our people are highly skilled and our businesses are competitive.

Council confirmed the importance of bringing the Commonwealth's reform agenda into the Roadmap, and tasked skills senior officials with developing a unified reform pathway for inclusion in the next draft.

Council further agreed to immediately fast track four pieces of foundational work:

- a review of VET Student Loans to ensure parity of access for students across Australia.
- on the use of micro-credentials in the national VET system to better respond to student and job-need while preserving the importance of nationally-recognised full qualifications.
- on quality and reforms to the Standards for Registered Training Organisations to move the system of regulation from its focus on compliance to focus on excellence in training.
- streamlining training packages to deliver more relevant skills for industry and individuals through immediate actions to make the current system faster, simpler and better. This will include immediate action to identify and remove all outdated and unused qualifications to improve the relevance and accessibility of the training system.

Council particularly noted that actions agreed to were in response to feedback from stakeholders about where urgent reform is needed.

Council directed the Australian Industry and Skills Council (AISC) and skills officials to develop criteria for commissioning new or updated training products and to establish clear timeframes for accelerated training product development before the next Council meeting.

This will improve transparency and accountability across the product development lifecycle; improve timeframes for training package development; future proof the system by looking at options for simplifying qualification construct and content; and improve support for registered training organisations to interpret and deliver training to meet industry's requirements.

Council tasked skills senior officials with progressing these key actions and with further developing the draft Roadmap for consideration at its next meeting. In development of a draft Roadmap, jurisdictions will consult with stakeholders.

Council reaffirmed the shared responsibility for strengthening and modernising the VET system across all jurisdictions. Council also acknowledged that meaningful change requires structural reform to place the skills agenda front and centre of a concerted effort to develop a world class national VET system with the flexibility to respond to specific regional needs and priorities.

Continuing collaboration for transparent and holistic data collection

Council acknowledged the national collaboration on data through the Performance Information for VET (PIVET). The three year work program has helped to improve transparency about the structure and funding of the VET system along with a greater understanding of the outcomes and pathways for VET students including employment outcomes for apprentices.

Members noted that continuing collaborative work under the PIVET projects will be central to the delivery of the Roadmap to achieve COAG's vision for VET.

Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC)

The Council noted an Annual Report from the AISC and welcomed Emeritus Professor Tracey Horton AO as the new Chair of the AISC. Council also acknowledged the contribution of outgoing Chair Professor John Pollaers OAM who has been in the role since the AISC's inception.

Quality of the national training system

Council confirmed their commitment to better outcomes for students and industry with a focus on supporting fair, transparent and effective regulation. Members noted the reforms announced by the Commonwealth to improve the Australian Skills Quality Authority's (ASQA's) engagement with the VET sector.

Council emphasised the critical role of ASQA in underpinning confidence in the VET sector and states and territories will engage with the rapid review of the regulator, as a key step in moving towards achieving excellence in training in this sector.

Next meeting

Members committed to meeting again in the first half of 2020 to continue the momentum and leadership of a strong national training system.