

AGREEMENT TO IMPLEMENT THE VET POLICY PARTNERSHIP
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES UNDER THE NATIONAL SKILLS
AGREEMENT FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER VET POLICY AND DELIVERY
ESTABLISHED BY SKILLS AND WORKFORCE MINISTERS COUNCIL UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE
NATIONAL SKILLS AGREEMENT WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE JOINT COUNCIL ON CLOSING
THE GAP

Preamble

The Skills and Workforce Ministers Council (SWMC) and First Nations Ministers are committed to Closing the Gap in skills, training and employment outcomes, and delivering a Vocational Education and Training (VET) system that supports Australians of all backgrounds to achieve their full potential. This commitment extends to the creation of a VET Policy Partnership (VETPP) to provide a specific focus on reform to the VET and skills systems in Australia, and a commitment to self-determined approaches to improve training outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

SWMC and the VETPP acknowledge the Traditional Owners across Australia and that the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, languages and knowledges are fundamental to shaping and improving VET outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations. This will support self-determination to significantly improve VET and life outcomes.

The authority to establish a VETPP originates from Clause A99 (a) of the National Skills Agreement, which requires the Commonwealth to work in partnership with the states and territories and the Coalition of Peaks, to establish and manage a Nationally Networked VETPP to ensure active engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities. This is supported by Clauses 28-33 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap on Priority Reform 1 for establishing Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision-Making between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties and governments.

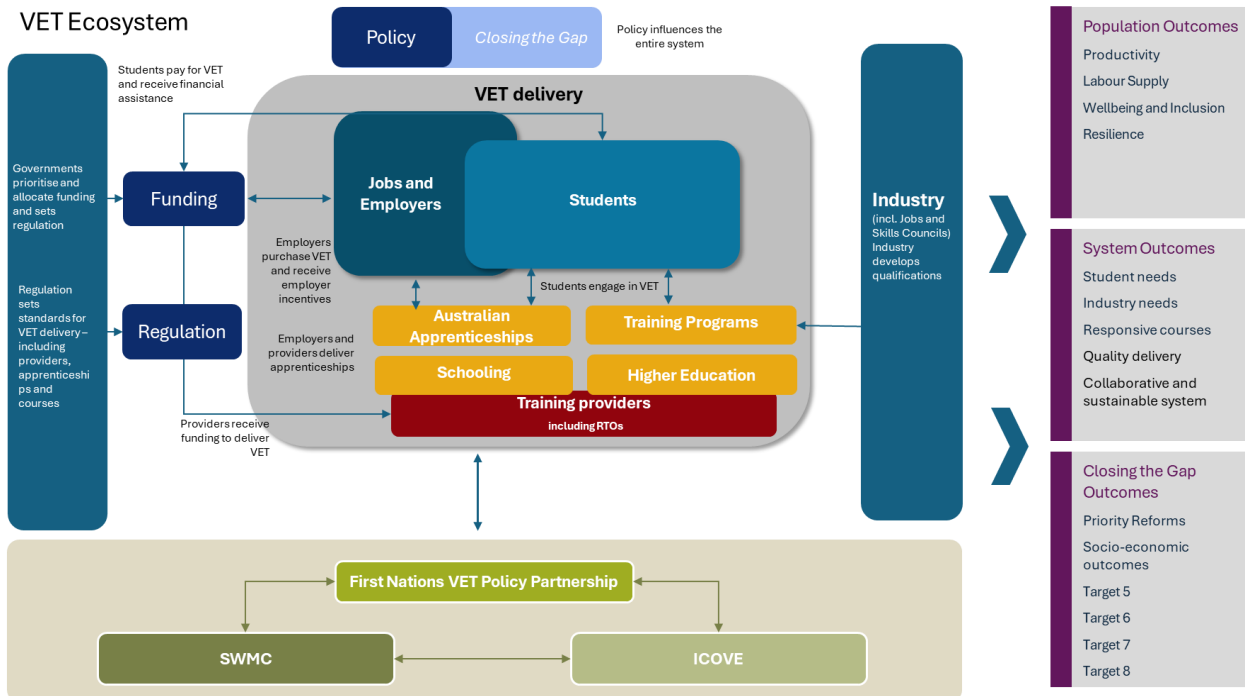
The Joint Council on Closing the Gap supports the establishment of the VETPP and is committed to undertaking joint priority setting to align efforts and maximise impact. The Joint Council on Closing the Gap has a key accountability role by overseeing progress on Priority Reforms, ensuring transparency in decision-making, and confirming that VETPP actions are aligned with the principles of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

For the purposes of this Agreement to Implement, a Nationally Networked VETPP means a joined-up network of members representing Aboriginal Community Controlled (ACC) and First Nations Owned (FNO) Registered Training Organisations (RTO) at a national and jurisdictional level in addition to

representatives from the Commonwealth, and all State and Territory governments. Membership should provide broad geographical coverage, with each member responsible for sharing information with their networks. The VETPP recognises that State and Territory governments have existing partnerships with First Nations organisations within their jurisdictions, noting some partnerships are emerging and continuing to develop. Matters best dealt with locally will be referred to those partnerships. A Nationally Networked VETPP approach aims to make systems change that considers respective place-based approaches without duplicating them – see Roles and Responsibilities for additional detail.

The National Skills Agreement provides for a step-change in governments' approach to delivering of Closing the Gap commitments for skills, with dedicated investment and concrete action to ensure that the design and delivery of VET to First Nations Australians is in full and genuine partnership. A commitment to supporting all four of the Priority Reforms of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is enshrined in the National Skills Agreement, with Closing the Gap as a national priority and specific funding allocated to Closing the Gap policy initiatives. The National Skills Agreement recognises this work will be delivered through, and consistent with, the partnership arrangements between First Nations peoples and governments in each jurisdiction and through the frontline delivery of ACC, FNO and non-Indigenous/mainstream RTOs.

For the purposes of this Agreement to Implement, the VET system encompasses several sectors including the Indigenous Centre of Vocational Excellence (ICOVE), ACC and FNO RTOs, private and public RTOs, training authorities, regulators and statutory authorities, Adult and Community Education providers, VET learners and students, and employers and industry. Additionally, there will be intersecting areas of interest such as across different industries and employers who rely on workers trained through VET and the workforce. The VETPP will play an integral role in considering the needs and reforms required to improve the skills, training and workforce outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across all these sectors.



VET is important to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as it provides pathways to further training, higher education and into employment, and strengthens individuals' economic status and social and emotional wellbeing, as well as in some cases, opportunity to engage in culturally specific learning. At a community level, VET strengthens the workforce, creating stronger businesses and economies.

In 2026, the Commonwealth funded and established the Indigenous Centre of Vocational Excellence (ICOVE), which commenced operations on 1 July 2026. The ICOVE will be built on four pillars of innovation, capacity building, policy and advocacy, and research and data. The ICOVE aims to support the growth of First Nations participation and leadership in VET. It will operate as a national evidence-informed best practice VET hub to create and promote high quality, culturally responsive training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that have strong pathways to employment outcomes.

Under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, six policy priority areas have established Policy Partnerships, which are:

- a. justice (adult and youth incarceration)
- b. social and emotional wellbeing (mental health)
- c. housing
- d. early childhood care and development
- e. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

f. Data

Additionally, the Commonwealth, Coalition of Peaks and the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance have entered into the First Nations Economic Partnership to advance the economic empowerment and lasting economic security for First Nations peoples, communities and organisations.

VET is a policy area that cuts across many sectors and industries. As such, the VETPP will support linkages to the existing Policy Partnership sectors and closely connect with the existing Closing the Gap Policy Partnerships.

Strong partnership elements

The VETPP is consistent with the Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The strong partnership elements at Clauses 32 and 33 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap apply to the VETPP.

This includes the elements of Partnership and Shared Decision-Making, which is about working together and negotiation to reach consensus among all parties. Partnerships are accountable and representative with a formal agreement in place signed by all parties. Decisions are made by consensus, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander positions are equal to that of governments.

Consistent with the principles of self-determination, this Agreement provides for the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, organisations and communities to inform and shape decisions about VET system and delivery in Australia. This is consistent with the principle articulated in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap: *“When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a genuine say in the design and delivery of services that affect them, better life outcomes are achieved”* (clause 6, page 2). The partnership through this Agreement will be driven through engagement between the VETPP and the SWMC, supported by the Joint Council on Closing the Gap and Partnership Working Group (PWG).

Purpose

1. The Purpose of this Agreement is to establish a mechanism for the Parties to develop a Nationally Networked, joined-up approach to improving and evaluating VET outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with a focus on:
 - a. Strengthening and improving skills and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners through systemic national VET reform, including accessible pathways into higher education and employment.
 - b. Supporting efforts to implement the National Skills Agreement, including the First Nations measures under the Outcomes Framework, and providing support for the development of future Skills Agreements
 - c. Contributing to the progress towards socio-economic targets and their outcomes under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

- d. Supporting efforts to embed culturally responsive practices that acknowledge and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, languages, knowledge systems, and learning styles.
 - e. Improving lifelong learning opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including improved Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Skills, with improved social and emotional wellbeing and cultural strength as related outcomes.
2. The primary functions of the VETPP are to:
- a. provide a structured mechanism for governments to work in partnership with First Nations peoples, ensuring that policy development and implementation in the VET system reflects genuine collaboration; and
 - b. strengthen the VET system by making recommendations to SWMC in collaboration with Joint Council, as required, to improve the educational, economic and social outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the VET system.
3. This Agreement will provide an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and aspirations, represented by the VETPP, are considered in VET policy decisions, not just policies targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and students.
4. This Agreement will authorise the VETPP to engage with SWMC to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander VET needs and aspirations to inform decisions made by Skills and Workforce Ministers.

Objectives

5. The objectives of the VETPP are to:
- a. Establish a Nationally Networked joined-up approach between all governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives, including learners, to advance community led VET outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners and to build the ACC and FNO RTO sector in line with Priority Reform 2 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.
 - b. Give a focus to the Priority Reforms in the National Skills Agreement, and how they can be harnessed to make the changes needed to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners can access high-quality, culturally safe VET courses across Australia including metro, regional and remote areas.
 - c. Identify opportunities to work more effectively across governments and with Industry to improve outcomes under Closing the Gap.
 - d. Identify systemic reforms and specific measures to improve VET outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including those intersecting with other sectors and industries and key transition points and pathways (such as those between school, VET and higher education).
 - e. Enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, communities and organisations to provide support for the development of future Skills Agreements.

- f. Identify opportunities for the VET system to address skills and workforce gaps in particular areas.
- 6. The VETPP will develop an annual forward workplan that details activities and projects work towards the objectives. The workplan will be endorsed by SWMC.

Partnership Principles

This Agreement will enable:

- 7. The VETPP will contribute strategically to SWMC and can propose items for consideration by SWMC as experts in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Vocational Education and Training.
- 8. This Agreement upholds SWMC authority and decision-making accountability, and the roles and responsibilities set out in Part 4 of the NSA. It ensures that the VETPP can contribute to the decision-making process in a productive, meaningful and transparent way.
 - a. Matters that relate to the individual responsibilities of states and territories will be dealt with through the partnership arrangements established in each jurisdiction, noting in some jurisdictions these partnerships are emerging.
- 9. SWMC may engage with the VETPP on all matters, guided by VETPP priorities and capacity.
- 10. This Agreement between the VETPP and SWMC is guided by the following principles derived from the commitments made by all governments through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap:
 - a. Voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Parties are of equal value as that of governments.
 - b. Transparency in decision-making, where matters for decision are in terms that are easily understood by all Parties and where there is enough information and time to understand the implications of the decision.
 - c. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives can speak without fear of reprisals or repercussions.
 - d. Self-determination is supported, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lived experience is understood and respected.
 - e. Funding for programs and services aligns with jointly agreed community priorities, noting governments retain responsibility for funding decisions.
 - f. Existing partnership arrangements within State and Territory boundaries remain valuable and are not being replaced by this Agreement.

SWMC will:

- 11. Invite the VETPP co-chairs to update SWMC on its workplan at least twice per year.
- 12. Share, as required, agenda items with the VETPP to seek the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people during their development, agreement and implementation and with sufficient time

to allow the VETPP to engage appropriately to inform policy design. This includes the agencies and companies that report to SWMC, where relevant.

13. Facilitate SWMC to effectively engage with the VETPP through the SWMC Secretariat and sub-committee Secretariats, including ensuring the VETPP receives invitations and papers to meetings.
14. Consider how the VETPP advice can be implemented in each government's jurisdiction/s including through policy design or more direct action.
15. Share data with the VETPP, where government is the owner of that data and privacy or other requirements allow, to inform shared decision-making.

Scope

16. This Agreement aims to transform the way in which Governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, communities and organisations, including honouring self-determination.
17. Noting that other socio-economic outcomes impact VET and that these intersections with other outcome areas will require consideration, the VETPP will focus on issues and actions that will deliver progress towards the four Priority Reforms and Outcomes 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.
18. Noting that the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is embedded as a priority across all areas of the National Skills Agreement, topics in scope for consideration are:
 - a. Issues and actions that progress the objectives of the VETPP, including the development of a First Nations VET framework
 - b. Ensuring a Nationally Networked approach to systems change aligned to Clauses A5, A93 and A99(a) of the National Skills Agreement.
 - c. Supporting ACC and FNO RTO sustainability, capacity and growth in addition to the support outlined at Clause A102(a) of the National Skills Agreement.
 - d. Strategies and actions that can be directly linked to progressing the socio-economic targets and indicators related to all outcomes in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, given that skills and VET are critical to their workforce needs.
 - e. Partnerships with other sectors to understand the scope of workforce and skills development needs of these sectors.
 - f. Priority setting with other Policy Partnerships and working collaboratively with Treasury departments on workforce and skills modelling.
 - g. Issues and actions that progress the Priority Reforms as they relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia's VET systems.

19. The Parties to the VETPP will have authority to determine by consensus whether a topic is in scope or not. If the Parties are unable to agree on whether a topic is in scope, the dispute resolution processes may be triggered.
20. Matters which are considered out of scope for the VETPP may be referred to other bodies or mechanisms for consideration in line with powers of the VETPP set out in this document.

Chairing arrangements

21. The VETPP is co-chaired by a representative of the ICOVE, as nominated by the Coalition of Peaks, and a representative of the Commonwealth who are Parties to the Agreement. The co-chairs are indicated in Schedule A.
22. The co-chairs are responsible for agreeing meeting agendas, chairing meetings, and overseeing and monitoring the work of the VETPP.

Parties

23. The Parties to the Agreement are all Australian Governments, the Indigenous Centre of Vocational Excellence, and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives as outlined in Schedule A.
24. Continuity of membership and attendance at meetings is critical to the effective functioning of the VETPP.
 - a. Coalition of Peaks representatives will confirm their attendance with the Peaks' co-chair prior to meetings. If they are unable to attend the Peaks' co-chair will nominate an alternative representative in consultation with the relevant Peak. If the member misses three meetings the co-chair will ask them to reconsider their ongoing membership.
 - b. Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives will also confirm their attendance with the Peaks' co-chair prior to meetings. They have been selected based on individual expertise. In the event an independent member cannot attend, the Peaks co-chair can appoint a suitable proxy with the relevant expertise. If the member misses three meetings the co-chair will ask them to reconsider their ongoing membership and advise the Coalition of Peaks. In such an event, the Coalition of Peaks may remove the member and call expressions of interest for a replacement.
 - c. Government representatives will confirm their attendance with the Government co-chair prior to meetings. If a Government representative is unable to attend a meeting, the relevant jurisdiction will nominate an alternative representative. If the jurisdiction has inconsistent attendance for three consecutive meetings, the government co-chair will review their membership and consult with the jurisdiction to consider if an alternative representative is required.
25. All Parties will communicate respectfully and adhere to culturally safe engagement protocols.

26. Subject to the agreement of co-chairs, subject matter experts may be invited to attend the meeting of the VETPP to support of the work of the VETPP.

Roles and responsibilities

27. All Parties are jointly responsible for:

- a. Developing a Nationally Networked joined-up approach to the VET policy area including:
 - i. identifying opportunities to work more effectively across jurisdictions where there is shared responsibility (to be read in conjunction with clause 28(a) of this Agreement to Implement),
 - ii. reducing gaps and duplication, and
 - iii. improving VET outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- b. Agreeing the priorities and work plan for the VETPP
- c. Conducting and commissioning research and studies, analysing data and information, preparing reports
- d. Developing recommendations and taking forward action through the implementation approaches of the National Skills Agreement, and
- e. Tracking and reporting on progress.

28. The government Parties will:

- a. Engage with their respective First Nations partners and other agencies in their jurisdiction to develop cross-agency perspectives to inform the work of the VETPP
- b. Engage with other organisations to seek expert advice
- c. Engage with relevant Ministers and seek Ministerial clearance of key actions for VETPP agreement, as required, including those Ministers represented on Joint Council and the Education Ministers Meeting
- d. Consider how recommendations of the VETPP and actions agreed can be implemented in their jurisdiction, including through the implementation planning process or more urgent action
- e. Communicate the work of the VETPP to its First Nations partners and other agencies in their jurisdiction
- f. Share data with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, where government is the owner of that data and privacy or other requirements allow, to inform shared decision-making.

29. The Coalition of Peaks Parties will:

- a. Liaise across the Coalition of Peaks and their membership and bring the perspectives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations, their expertise, and their lived experiences to the deliberations of the partnership;

- b. Provide opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations to inform them of their concerns and how they might be ameliorated (resolved).

Term

- 30. The Agreement comes into effect on the date of signing and continues for an initial period in line with the term of the National Skills Agreement.
- 31. The VETPP will be evaluated and reviewed after a three-year term. The process for this review will be agreed by VETPP Parties.

Amendment

- 32. The Agreement can be amended at any time by agreement of the Parties.
- 33. The VETPP will consider whether any amendments are required to this Agreement, its membership and its forward work plan at least once each year.

Decision-making

- 34. The VETPP is guided by the principle that decision-making is shared between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. Shared decision-making is:
 - a. By consensus, where the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Parties hold as much weight as the governments'
 - b. Transparent, where matters for decision are in terms that are easily understood by all Parties and where there is enough information and time to understand the implications of the decision
 - c. Where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives can speak without fear of reprisals or repercussions
 - d. Where a wide variety of groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including women, young people, elders, LGBTQIA+SB and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability can have their voice heard
 - e. Where self-determination is supported, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lived experience is understood and respected
 - f. Where relevant funding for programs and services align with jointly agreed community priorities, noting governments retain responsibility for funding decisions
 - g. Where partnership Parties have access to the same data and information, in an easily accessible format, on which any decisions are made.

Recommendations

- 35. The VETPP may make recommendations under this Agreement and will provide those recommendations via the Skills Senior Officials Network (SSON) to SWMC for its information, unless

the recommendation is for an action to be taken to SWMC for agreement (these processes are illustrated at Schedule B).

36. All recommendations made pursuant to this Agreement are made by consensus of the Parties. Recommendations are non-binding.
37. Recommendations can be made in relation to shared and Commonwealth responsibilities under Part 4 of the NSA, and with regard to the National Skills Plan.
38. Existing reporting mechanisms, such as the National Skills Plan and jurisdictional action plans, or SWMC communiques, will be leveraged to report on SWMC responses to policy partnership recommendations.
39. Actions to respond to relevant recommendations would be included in each Party's Closing the Gap annual implementation plan updates where recommendations are public. Progress on actions against recommendations should be outlined in Parties' Closing the Gap annual reports.
40. Where recommendations are agreed by SWMC they will be referred to the relevant authority for consideration or implementation, as appropriate.
41. The extent to which recommendations have been implemented by jurisdictions and other organisations will be reported as part of the VETPP reporting process (set out under the Reporting section of this Agreement).

Referring matters

42. The VETPP may refer matters which it deems out of scope to an appropriate mechanism for consideration.
43. By agreement, the Parties may establish sub-structures or working groups as required to progress recommendations or explore specific topics arising under the VETPP. Where possible, Parties should rely on existing structures, including existing jurisdictional and regional arrangements to progress recommendations.

Expert advice

44. Subject matter experts, including people with lived experience, may be invited to attend meetings of the VETPP from time to time for the purpose of presenting on topics being considered by the VETPP or to provide expert advice. Experts must be agreed by Parties before being invited to attend a meeting.

Data sharing

45. In line with Priority Reform Four, parties should endeavour to share available data and information with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and government organisations through

the VETPP. This will assist the VETPP to have clear understanding of context, to make evidence-based recommendations and to gauge progress toward the targets. The VETPP may agree to ask Parties to collate and provide relevant data, and Parties will endeavour to do so as far as possible.

Reporting

46. The VETPP will report to SWMC at least twice per year as a standing agenda item. This standing item will include a verbal update on how the VETPP is progressing, including jurisdictional updates on actions taken to support the objectives of the VETPP.
47. In addition to verbal updates, the VETPP will report annually in writing to the SWMC on:
 - a. Recommendations it has made
 - b. Actions being taken to implement recommendations
 - c. Progress against the objectives of the VETPP
 - d. Progress against any relevant Priority Reforms and socio-economic targets in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap
 - e. Priority work being undertaken with other Policy Partnerships and across sectors
 - f. Any other updates.
48. The written report will, where possible, draw on existing reporting and not add additional reporting burdens. It will compile information from all the jurisdictional implementation plans on how recommendations of the VETPP are being addressed. It will also include a short summary of how the VETPP is progressing, and a list of any recommendations made by the VETPP.
49. The VETPP annual report to SWMC and Joint Council will be tabled via the SSON (see governance diagram at Schedule B). The SSON may prepare additional materials or responses to accompany the report.
50. The VETPP will provide updates to Joint Council and Closing the Gap Partnership Working Group, at least once per year. This will support transparency and will provide a mechanism for accountability on shared priorities, including in relation to embedding the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms.
51. Actions arising from recommendations of the VETPP will be incorporated into the National Skills Plan and Jurisdictional Action plans as appropriate. Actions that are incorporated into Closing the Gap Implementation Plans will also be reported on through the Closing the Gap annual public reports (clause 118 and 119 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap). These reports should also include a specific reference to the VETPP and its progress.

Dispute resolution

52. The Parties to the VETPP will endeavour in the spirit of co-operation, good faith, and mutual trust to resolve any difficulties or misunderstandings with respect to the VETPP.
53. If the matter cannot be resolved by negotiation, the VETPP will refer the matter via the SSON to SWMC for resolution.

Meetings

54. Regular meetings of the Parties will be held as required. The Parties will meet at least four times per calendar year.
55. The forward workplan for the VETPP for its first 12 months will be determined at the first meeting of the Parties. The agenda for each meeting will be determined with input from the Parties and approved by the co-chairs.

Secretariat support

56. A Secretariat (Joint Secretariat) will be established that is shared between DEWR and the ICOVE. The Joint Secretariat will support the VETPP by:
 - a. Preparing papers
 - b. Organising meetings including travel
 - c. Compiling the annual reports
 - d. Maintaining and updating public material.
57. Joint Secretariat responsibilities will be shared between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and government leads to support shared decision-making in the development of partnership documents and agendas.
58. Papers will be distributed one week ahead of each meeting. The VETPP may agree to progress items out of session.

Resourcing

59. In accordance with Clause 33 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the Parties acknowledge that the First Nations Parties need to be provided with adequate and ongoing financial support to enable them to engage and negotiate as equal partners. This financial support will be separate to their current funding as this is a new activity not covered by existing funding sources.
60. The Parties acknowledge that the other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Parties also need to be provided with adequate and ongoing financial support to enable them to engage and negotiate as equal partners.

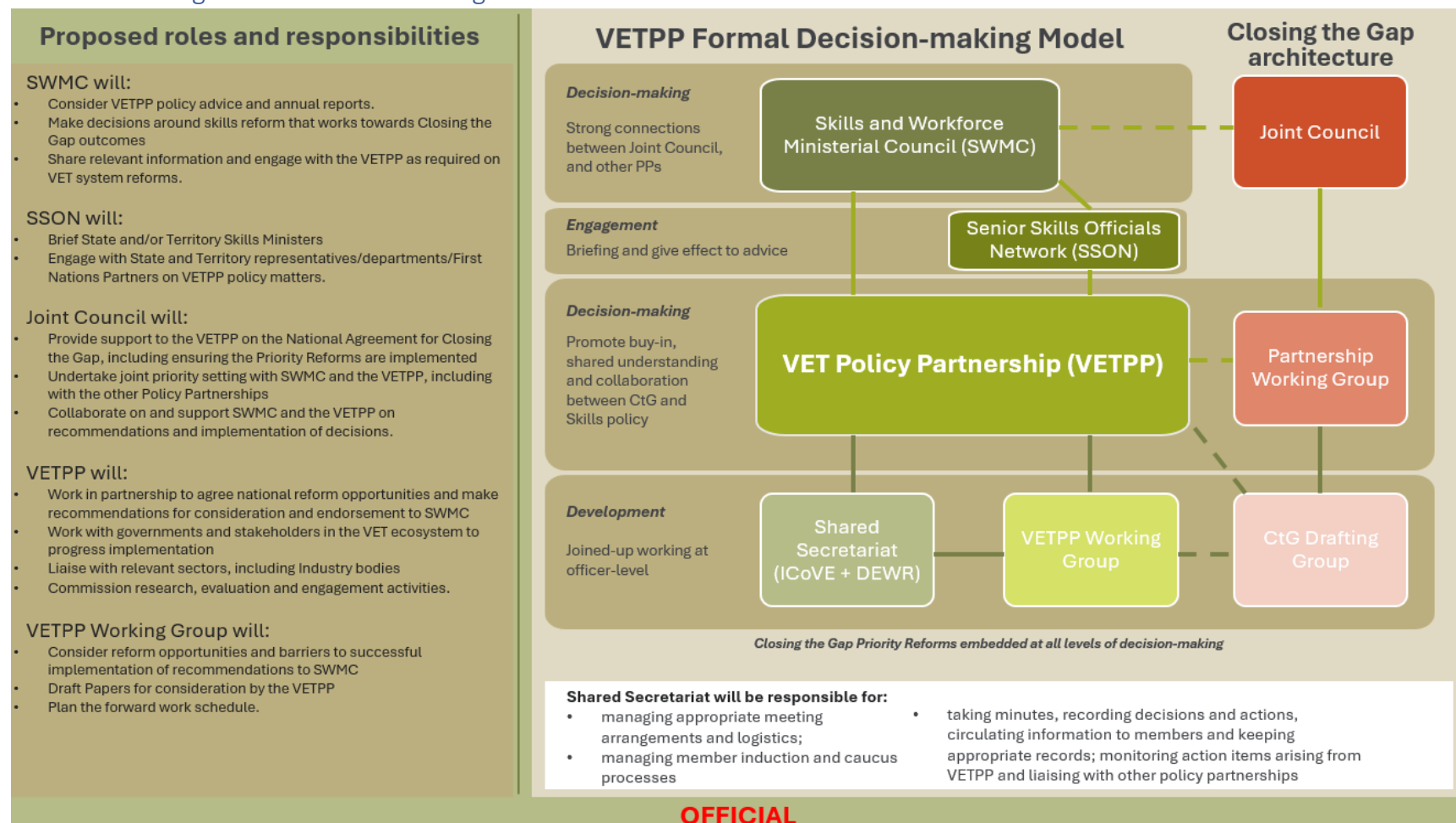
61. The Commonwealth provides funding to ICOVE to support the Joint Secretariat, including to meet reasonable meeting costs. The Commonwealth also provides funding to ICOVE to support travel costs for First Nations members. First Nations members may choose not to accept fees where they already receive a salary or other remuneration from their employer.
62. Resourcing for additional activities of the VETPP will be negotiated and agreed by the Parties as they arise during the life of the Agreement. This includes the commissioning of any reports or expert evidence.

Schedule A: Parties to the Agreement to Implement the VET Policy Partnership

- **Lead Peak (ICOVE representative) as Co-Chair** – 1 senior official appointed from the Indigenous Centre of Vocational Excellence.
- **Lead Commonwealth Agency as Co-Chair** – 1 senior official nominated from the Commonwealth Government at the Deputy Secretary level.
- **4 Coalition of Peaks Representatives** – selected from the Coalition of Peaks Members, including the lead Peak/Co-chair, from different states/territories.
- **5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Independent Representatives** – selected through an open and transparent Expression of Interest process by the Coalition of Peaks, including a representative nominated by the First Nations RTO Community of Practice.
- **Commonwealth representative** – 1 senior official nominated from the National Indigenous Australians Agency at the Deputy Secretary level.
- **8 Government Representatives** – senior officials from each state and territory nominated by their jurisdictions.

Non-permanent Subject Matter Experts, including people with lived experience, may be invited to attend VETPP meetings for the purpose of presenting on topics being considered by the VETPP or to provide expert advice.

Schedule B: Diagram of Decision-Making Governance



Schedule C: Definitions

In this Agreement, unless otherwise specified, words and phrases are to be interpreted as follows:

Term	Definition
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation (ACC)	As defined under Clause 44 in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation delivers services, including land and resource management, that builds the strength and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people and is: • incorporated under relevant legislation and not-for-profit • controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people • connected to the community, or communities, in which they deliver the services • governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander governing body.
Accountable Ministers	Government Ministers responsible for Skills
Closing the Gap (National Agreement on Closing the Gap)	A formal agreement between the Coalition of Peaks, all Australian Governments and the Australian Local Government Association, which took effect on 27 July 2020. Its objective is to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.
Coalition of Peaks (Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations)	The Coalition of Peaks is a representative body consisting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander national and state and territory community-controlled peak organisations who work to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
Co-Chairs	One representative nominated by the Commonwealth and the Coalition of Peaks, responsible for agreeing meeting agendas and papers, overseeing and monitoring the work of the VET Policy Partnership and co-chairing VET Policy Partnership meetings.
Commonwealth Government	The Commonwealth of Australia.
Cultural safety	Cultural safety is about overcoming the power imbalances of places, people and policies that occur between the majority non-Indigenous position and the minority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person's identity, of who they are and what they need. Cultural safety is met through actions from the majority position which recognise, respect, and nurture the unique cultural identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Only the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person who is recipient of a service or interaction can determine whether it is culturally safe.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Organisation (other than an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	A business, charity, not-for-profit organisation, incorporated under Commonwealth, state or territory legislation, that has at least 51% First Nations ownership and/or directorship and is operated for the benefit of First Nations communities.

community-controlled organisation)	
Formal Partnerships	An agreed arrangement (policy and place-based) between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations that set out who makes decisions, how decisions are made, and what decisions will be about.
Foundation Skills	English language, literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills and employability skills.
Government / Government Parties	All Australian governments, consisting of the Commonwealth, states and territories, and ALGA.
Indigenous Centre of Vocational Excellence (ICOVE)	The ICOVE operates as an alternative model to a First Nations skills peak and performs the role of a national, evidence-informed best practice Vocational Education and Training (VET) hub. The ICOVE is built around 4 key pillars of innovation, capacity building, policy and advocacy, and research and data. The ICOVE aims to support the growth of First Nations participation and leadership in VET, and create and promote high quality, culturally responsive training opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that have strong pathways to employment outcomes. As the Skills Peak alternative, the ICOVE partners with governments in the formation of the VET Policy Partnership and support its operations. The ICOVE is hosted by the Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service in consortium with Tranby National Indigenous Adult Education and Training.
Interim Partnership Committee	Established in October 2024 to assist in the development of VET Policy Partnership. The Interim Partnership Committee will transition to the VET Policy Partnership upon endorsement of the key enabling documents of the VET Policy Partnership.
Joint Council (Joint Council on Closing the Gap)	The Ministerial Council on Closing the Gap, with representation from Government Parties and the Coalition of the Peaks. The Joint Council has a key accountability role by overseeing progress on Priority Reforms, ensuring transparency in decision-making, and confirming that VETPP actions are aligned with the principles of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Further details on the Joint Council can be found in the Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap 2019-2029.
Joint Secretariat	Collectively, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the Indigenous Centre of Vocational Excellence with responsibilities reflected in <i>Clauses 56 to 58</i> of VET Policy Partnership Agreement to Implement.
Member	A representative from an organisation invited to participate in the VET Policy Partnership on a long-term basis to provide policy advice and collaborate on projects.
National Skills Agreement (NSA)	A formal agreement between the Commonwealth and states and territories, which took effect on 1 January 2024. Its objective is to ensure that the national VET system provides high-quality, responsive and accessible education and training to boost productivity, deliver national priorities and support Australians to

	obtain the skills and capabilities they need to prosper. It also provides for a step-change in governments' approach to delivering of Closing the Gap commitments for skills, with dedicated investment and concrete action to ensure that the design and delivery of VET to First Nations Australians is in full and genuine partnership.
Nationally-Networked	A joined-up network of members representing ACCO and First Nations led/owned RTOs at the national and jurisdictional level in addition to representatives from the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. Membership should provide broad geographical coverage, with each member responsible for sharing information with their networks. The VET Policy Partnership recognises that State and Territory governments have existing partnerships with First Nations organisations within their jurisdictions and matters best dealt with locally will be referred to those partnerships. A Nationally Networked VETPP approach aims to make systems change that considers respective place-based approaches without duplicating them.
NIAA	The National Indigenous Australians Agency is a government agency responsible for ensuring the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are met through government policies, programs and services.
Parties	Means the Commonwealth Government and ICOVE as co-chairs, all Australian Governments that have endorsed the VETPP Agreement to Implement, the Coalition of Peaks representatives, and independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.
Partnership Agreement	Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap 2019-2029, signed by COAG and the Coalition of Peaks, setting out shared decision-making arrangements on the next phase of Closing the Gap.
Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)	Organisations approved by one of the following VET Regulators to deliver nationally recognised training in the VET sector: • The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) • The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) • The Training Accreditation Council Western Australia (TAC)
Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council (SWMC)	The Ministerial Council established on an ongoing and regular basis for Commonwealth and state and territory ministers to work collaboratively on issues specific to skills and workforce, with a reporting line to the National Cabinet.
Skills Ministers	Minister responsible for skills and training in the relevant jurisdiction
Skills Senior Officials' Network (SSON)	An advisory body that works collaboratively and in consultation with the wider vocational and education (VET) sector and First Nations representatives, to consider and provide advice on strategic and operational matters within the sector to support the Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council (SWMC) achieve agreed objectives, outcomes, and priorities, including those set out in the National Skills Agreement.
Subject Matter Expert	An individual who can offer their lived experience or expert advice, (without decision-making powers) and may be invited to share their expertise with the VET Policy Partnership.
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 September

	2007 as an instrument detailing the rights of Indigenous peoples in international law and policy, containing minimum standards for the recognition, protection and promotion of these rights.
VET	Vocational Education and Training - <i>A definition to be co-drafted and agreed by the VETPP at a future meeting.</i>
VET Policy Partnership	The First Nations VET Policy Partnership between the Commonwealth and the state and territory governments, and the Coalition of Peaks, established to ensure active engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities.
VET Policy Partnership Agreement to Implement	This Agreement document on the First Nations Vocational Education and Training Policy Partnership, endorsed by the Commonwealth and the state and territory governments, and the Coalition of Peaks.
Working Group	Established by Parties on agreed matters to progress priorities, recommendations or explore specific topics identified in the Workplan and to advance distinct streams of work.
Workplan	Publicly available Annual Workplan detailing how the Partners will identify, achieve and implement the priorities of the VET Policy Partnership. It will detail activities and projects that will progress the objectives of the VETPP, to be endorsed by SWMC.

Schedule D: Members of the VET Policy Partnership

Government Member Representatives

Commonwealth Government – Anna Faithfull, Deputy Secretary Skills and Training, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (Co-Chair)

Commonwealth Government – Joshua Smith, Deputy CEO of Policy and Program, National Indigenous Australians Agency

Victorian Government – Susan Thomas, Executive Director, TAGE Partnerships and Governance, Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions

Tasmanian Government – Libby Doughty, Director, Strategy and Reform, Skills Tasmania

New South Wales Government - Michele Hall, Executive Director, Aboriginal Education and Communities, Department of Education

Western Australian Government – Ross Kelly, Executive Director, Policy, Planning and Innovation, Department of Training and Workforce Development

South Australian Government - Kim Eldridge, Executive Director, Skills South Australia

Australian Capital Territory Government – Kate Starick, Executive Group Manager, Economic Development Division, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Eligible Government Member Representatives

Northern Territory Government – Amelia Suku, Executive Director, Skills Northern Territory

First Nations Member Representatives

Dr Belinda Russon, Chief Executive Officer, Indigenous Centre of Vocational Excellence (Co-Chair)

Coalition of Peaks Representatives

Christine Stokes, Director, VET Workforce Programs, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

Sherry-Ann Toomey, Director of Sector Engagement, AbSec Learning and Development Centre - Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation NSW

David Roberts, Director of Innovation and Training, Aboriginal Health College, Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW

Christine Thyer, Chief Executive Officer, South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Council

Independent First Nations Members

Peter Renehan

Harold Graham

Catherine Law

Jim O'Shea

Tanya McGregor

