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The Tasmanian Government welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Perceptions and Status of Vocational Education and Training (VET).

The Tasmanian Government's vision is for a training and workforce development system that is accessible, job-focused and responsive, supporting stronger pathways to jobs and skills for all Tasmanians. Tasmania is experiencing labour shortages across all sectors with a strong reliance on the VET system to deliver the skills needs now and into the future.

In response to the Terms of Reference, this submission highlights current challenges, Tasmania's efforts, examples of what is working, and highlights opportunities for greater national action.

The national VET system is complicated and not well understood by VET participants, particularly learners and employers trying to navigate their training options. There are opportunities to be more localised and applied, to communicate the benefits of VET, demystify the VET experience and provide better information that helps guide choice.

The perception and status of VET in Tasmania varies depending on age, region, and background. Tasmanians generally understand the role of VET to acquire practical skills into traditional trades. Within schools, VET can be viewed as a tool for disengaged or non-academic learners. In the post-pandemic context, Tasmania has observed a growing understanding of VET as an option to change jobs and gain greater employment surety in a changing world with a varying learner cohort.

At a high-level, the Tasmanian Government identifies the following key areas for national action:

- Ongoing VET promotion is critical to shaping perceptions and the status of VET with a need for greater alignment of Commonwealth initiatives complementary to state and local efforts, and that this requires recognition that such activity warrants national funding.
- Engaging all VET participants (Governments, learners, industry and employers and registered training organisations (RTOs)) as having a role in supporting choice and promoting VET.
- Recognition and targeted approach to engaging students with weak foundation skills or who experience other disadvantages that impact their capacity to engage in VET.
- Recognition of the importance of subsidiarity in developing a new National Skills Agreement. This ensures local responses are tailored and the system is simplified for students.

The Tasmanian Government welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Australian Government on these matters, recognising concurrent work through the national skills reform agenda.

## **Ongoing importance of localised and targeted VET promotion**

The Tasmanian Government actively promotes the value, opportunity, and pathways in VET through direct communications, alongside building partnerships with VET participants. Since November 2020, the Tasmanian Government has delivered a state-led VET promotional campaign.

During the pandemic, VET promotion messaging focused on VET as providing ‘the skills to take you further’ and a baseline focus through the various programs released by the Australian Government (such as Job Trainer). These messages resonated strongly with 18–34-year-olds and exceeded expectations for visibility and views. Digital campaigns can play a large role to engage adult learners.

Tasmanian learners are more likely to consider options in VET through their networks (peers, employers, school or community) and where VET is available in their local area. This requires tailored and localised VET promotion, complemented by national sources of information.

For school aged learners, the greatest influences on opinion about VET include parents, peers, and teachers. Building close connections between schools, industry, and training providers has been crucial to engaging school leavers. In Tasmania, the following approaches have worked well:

- The VETStream 2022 program working with an Industry Training Hub to provide public secondary school participants with local and authentic content on VET in their area.
- The website Careerify, produced by the Department for Education, Children and Young People, aims to support evidence-based career education in schools, including for parents.

In this regard, opportunities to improve the status and perception of VET include:

- Clarity on the role of VET participants including the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments, RTOs and Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) providers in providing information about VET, and to promote coordinated and collaborative efforts where necessary.
- Baseline national promotion of VET by the Commonwealth should be complementary to state-level promotions that accommodate regional differences and target cohorts as well as support for state-based campaigns through national funding arrangements.
- Work underway to develop a new model for VET training products provides an opportunity to revisit how VET qualifications and pathways are communicated to VET participants.
- Active and ongoing digital and social campaigns to reach VET participants, with personalised content and user-friendly access that will enable them to decide to engage and invest in VET.
- Produce materials that provide clarity on the pathways that lead to realistic work transitions and careers within communities, such as salary information, VET and university linkages, and to highlight employers that learners may find inspiring leading from VET to jobs.

## **Building partnerships with all VET participants, particularly industry**

By building partnerships, there are opportunities to boost understanding and the value of VET. This includes making it easier for VET participants, particularly learners and employers, to navigate the system, engage in delivery, and make the case for co-investment alongside Governments.

Tasmanian employers have a varied understanding of VET. For Tasmanian employers engaged in VET, there is an understanding of how training, through on-the-job experience, can grow and upskill their workforce. Alternatively, Tasmanian employers not engaged with VET have generally low awareness of how VET can support their business and the opportunities within the VET system.

Building partnerships is a key priority of the Tasmanian Government to drive strong VET outcomes. The Tasmanian Government is establishing a refreshed approach to industry engagement that will focus on supporting stronger, more collaborative partnerships between VET participants through the development of Industry Compacts.

Industry and RTOs working together is also key to promoting pathways into VET and jobs. The Tasmanian Government is actively working with TasTAFE to be a more future-focused and market-aligned training provider, with a focus on building engagement with industry. Private RTOs in Tasmania also maintain relationships with industry to support demand driven training offerings.

Facilitating easier navigation of training options is critical to raising the profile of VET. With over 150 RTOs operating in Tasmania alone, it can be daunting for learners and employers to identify which RTO and qualifications can meet desired skill needs. National VET information is generally pitched at learners and could be improved to provide targeted advice for employers. This could include promotion of Group Training Organisations (GTOs) as a value-added pathway for small and medium enterprises to engage in the apprenticeship and traineeship system.

Industry and employers taking a lead in developing resources and running events to promote career pathways has worked well in Tasmania. For example, the Tasmanian Minerals, Manufacturing and Energy Council offers a suite of resources and delivers 'insight tours' that allow learners and teachers to explore opportunities through VET to take back into learning.

Industry and employer feedback indicates the need for government support for innovative training delivery models and partnerships that better meet the needs of users. Resourcing and time constraints are often the key barriers to encouraging successful partnerships.

In this regard, opportunities to improve the status and perception of VET include:

- Mechanisms to regularly engage industry as a resource to raise the profile of VET and support its delivery, such as to create meaningful learning opportunities and to support RTOs and school educators to retain currency through industry exposure.
- Deeper industry engagement with training package development will raise the value and relevance of VET products, and build confidence that qualifications align to local industry need. At times, there is also uncertainty around what updated training packages deliver in practical terms.
- Providing national and locally tailored VET information targeted to industry and employers (in addition to learners) including the role of GTOs.
- Promoting and encouraging partnerships through showcasing of best practice, including the Industry Collaboration Award at the Tasmanian and Australian Training Awards,
- Employer incentives to promote Certificate II VET qualifications as a valid career pathway recognising that not all learners are ready to take on a Certificate III or higher offering.

### **Engaging students who lack foundation skills or experience other disadvantages**

Increasing opportunity and access is a key priority for the Tasmanian Government. The Tasmanian Government has a dedicated focus on facilitating access and participation through:

- Establishing conditions in funding arrangements with RTOs to recruit and support diverse cohorts and/or those facing disadvantage or barriers to employment.
- Our VET Promotional campaign included a suite of targeted success stories and introduced Tasmanian ambassadors, including from rural, regional and disadvantaged backgrounds.
- A coordinated approach to lifelong learning for Tasmanians, guided by the Adult Learning Strategy, which has achieved strong outcomes in adult literacy and numeracy.
- Wrap around support is available for those who need it, as complementary to training.

Some communities in Tasmania experience persistent disadvantage, and literacy, numeracy and digital literacy remain significant barriers to maximising participation in an increasingly technologically advanced economy. In addition, Tasmania's population is small and dispersed which

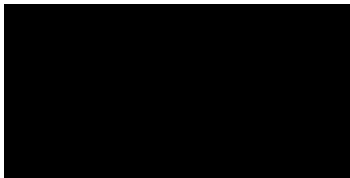
creates unique challenges for access to training, employment, internet, and transport. It is important that adequate support is available to different cohorts behind activities that seek to incentivise uptake.

In this regard, opportunities to improve the status and perception of VET include:

- National skills funding that recognises the complexity associated with engaging students who lack foundation skills or experience other disadvantages (i.e., regional delivery) and the need for wraparound supports to enable students to achieve their desired outcomes.
- Coordination of Australian Government programs in working with target cohorts including alignment with activity occurring at a state-level and across portfolios.
- Ensuring that promotional campaigns have effective reach to audiences from non-English speaking backgrounds or that do not have access or skill in accessing digital technologies.
- Programs to enable employers to create thriving, supportive workplaces.
- Allowing Workforce Australia providers to apply for education outcomes where they support job seekers to enrol, engage and participate in training linked to employment.

Thank you again for enabling the Tasmanian Government to have input into this process, as an opportunity for further considerations and action on raising the profile of VET in Australia.

Yours sincerely



Hon Felix Ellis MP

**Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth**

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