

Chapter 2

Review of annual reports

2.1 This chapter examines selected annual reports in greater detail, and provides the Senate with information that may be of interest. The following reports are discussed in this chapter:

- Department of Education and Training;
- Australian Skills Quality Authority;
- Australian National University;
- Department of Employment;
- Comcare and Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission; and
- Safe Work Australia.

Department of Education and Training

2.2 The Department of Education and Training (the Department) has portfolio responsibilities for national policies and programs to help Australians access quality early learning, school education, higher education, vocational education and training, and international education and research.¹ In 2014-15, the Department sought to achieve strongly against four goals; to support quality early learning and school, to excel through knowledge, to build skills and capability and to enable business areas.²

2.3 A priority for the Department in 2014-15 was working with states, territories and national agencies to deliver the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) online from 2017.³ Moving NAPLAN assessments online will allow individual tests to be tailored according to each student's ability, giving teachers and parents more accurate information regarding student performance.⁴ This tailored approach will enhance opportunities for teachers to help students develop fundamental literacy and numeracy skills.⁵

2.4 There was an emphasis in 2014-15 on enhancing teaching of foreign languages.⁶ The Department commenced the Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA) trial in 41 services offering a preschool programme. The trial will provide

1 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 2.

2 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 2-3.

3 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 17.

4 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 31.

5 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 31.

6 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 17.

over 1600 preschool children across Australia with the opportunity to test new applications designed to develop recognition skills of a foreign language through play based learning.⁷ The aim of the trial is to determine the effectiveness of early exposure to languages through online programmes.⁸ Three learning applications have been released to date and include a number of the major languages other than English spoken in Australia.⁹

2.5 In 2014-15, the Department has worked to implement the Government's vocational education and training (VET) reform agenda, with a focus on improving the quality of training and job outcomes for students.¹⁰ National consultations with stakeholders on VET were carried out in early 2015 and have been a key element of each step in the VET reform process.¹¹ As part of the reform implementation process, the Department introduced a number of measures aimed at supporting Australian apprentices.¹² One of these measures is the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (the Apprenticeships Network). Commencing on 1 July 2015, the Apprenticeships Network aims to increase apprenticeship completion rates by delivering tailored advice and support to apprentices and employers.¹³

2.6 The Department of Education Strategic Plan 2014-17 was launched in July 2014, setting out the Department's goals and overarching vision of 'opportunity through learning'.¹⁴ The strategic plan describes the Department's pathways, values and culture. It also includes the Department's commitment to improving education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.¹⁵

2.7 The committee finds the Department's annual report to be compliant with reporting requirements and easy to navigate.

Australian Skills Quality Authority

2.8 The Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) was established on 1 July 2011 under the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011* and supplementary legislation.¹⁶ The agency was transferred to the Education and Training portfolio in December 2014 following machinery of government changes arising from

7 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 18.

8 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 26.

9 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 27.

10 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 39.

11 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 66.

12 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 65.

13 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 65-66.

14 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 74.

15 Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 74.

16 Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 4.

the Administrative Arrangements Order of 23 December 2014. ASQA is the national VET regulator with responsibilities for maintaining the strength and reputation of Australia's VET sector.¹⁷

2.9 ASQA received a total of 6079 applications in relation to registration as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) during the 2014-15 reporting period.¹⁸ This represents a decrease of 20.2 per cent from the 2013-2014 year.¹⁹ This decrease has been largely attributed to a reduction in the number of applications from providers to change their registration, which has in turn resulted from the equivalent training package reform.²⁰ Implemented on 1 July 2014, the equivalent training package reform means that when a training package product is updated, and this updated product is considered to be 'equivalent' to the former version, it is automatically added to the provider's scope of registration.²¹ This is one of a suite of seven reforms implemented by ASQA as part of the Australian Government's VET Regulatory Reform agenda.²²

2.10 A key issue in the VET sector in 2014-15 was the marketing employed by approved VET FEE-HELP providers.²³ A high number of complaints received during the reporting period were related to the marketing of providers and courses to vulnerable individuals.²⁴ Marketing issues represent 13.9 per cent of the complaints received by ASQA since its establishment, making it the second most common complaint category.²⁵ In line with the government's VET Regulatory Reform agenda, the new standards for RTOs, which came into effect on 1 April 2015, include explicit requirements for providers' marketing and advertising.²⁶

2.11 The committee commends ASQA for a well presented and accessible report.

Australian National University

2.12 The Australian National University (ANU) is a research-intensive education institute initially established by an Act of parliament in 1946.²⁷ ANU's functions are

17 Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 4.

18 Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 21.

19 Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 21.

20 Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 21.

21 Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 17.

22 Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 17.

23 Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 17.

24 Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 45.

25 Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 44.

26 Australian Skills Quality Authority, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 40.

27 Australian National University, *Annual Report 2014*, p. 82.

set out by the *Australian National University Act 1991* (ANU Act).²⁸ The University is governed by the ANU Council who, under the ANU Act, may enact Statutes to regulate matters relating to the operations of the University.²⁹

2.13 In his introduction, Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Ian Young AO noted that the first cohort of students studying a flexible double degree began in 2014.³⁰ These degrees allow students to combine two Bachelor degrees of their choice.³¹ In 2014, a total of 3027 students enrolled in flexible double degrees, representing 38 per cent of the undergraduate cohort for the reporting period.³²

2.14 Professor Young also noted that the number of international enrolments at the University had increased by 8.5 per cent from 2013.³³ A total of 6097 international enrolments were recorded across both undergraduate and postgraduate programs as compared to 5590 the previous year.³⁴ Students from North-East Asia made up the largest portion of international enrolments, representing more than half of the reported total.³⁵

2.15 The committee considers that the ANU has met its reporting requirements. However, the committee notes that while ANU's annual report contains an index, a compliance index would have greatly enhanced the report's accessibility.

Department of Employment

2.16 The Department of Employment (the Department) has portfolio responsibilities for national policies and programmes that assist Australians in finding and keeping employment and to work in safe and fair workplaces.³⁶ The Department's vision—More Jobs. Great Workplaces.—is built on the government's plans for stronger economic growth. The Department aims to achieve this vision through the provision of effective advice on policies that aim to create jobs and assist job seekers in finding employment.³⁷

28 Australian National University, *Annual Report 2014*, p. 82.

29 Australian National University, *Annual Report 2014*, p. 104.

30 Australian National University, *Annual Report 2014*, p. 6.

31 Australian National University, *Annual Report 2014*, p. 26.

32 Australian National University, *Annual Report 2014*, p. 27.

33 Australian National University, *Annual Report 2014*, p. 6.

34 Australian National University, *Annual Report 2014*, p. 61.

35 Australian National University, *Annual Report 2014*, p. 61.

36 Department of Employment, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 1.

37 Department of Employment, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 2.

2.17 A focus for the Department in 2014-15 was designing the new employment services model, Jobactive.³⁸ The new programme, implemented on 1 July 2015, replaces the Job Services Australia programme.³⁹ Jobactive is comprised of five services that are designed to be more flexible and responsive to the needs of jobseekers and employers. Specifically, the programme aims to ensure that job seekers better meet the needs of employers; increase job seeker engagement by introducing stronger mutual obligation requirements; increase job outcomes for unemployed Australians; and reduce prescription and red tape for service providers.⁴⁰

2.18 The Work for the Dole programme makes up one component of the new Jobactive system. In her review, Ms Renée Leon, Secretary for the Department of Employment, highlighted the Work for the Dole programme as part of Jobactive and noted that 53 forums were held for potential host organisations in May and June 2015.⁴¹ The programme, which was phased in in 18 selected areas from 1 July 2014, is designed to assist job seekers in gaining the skills and experience necessary to move from welfare to work and to make a positive contribution to their local community.⁴²

2.19 During the 2014-15 reporting period, the Jobactive programme achieved 92 per cent of its expected number of commencements and 135 per cent of its expected number of places sourced.⁴³ Following a competitive tender process, 19 Work for the Dole Coordinators commenced work nationally on 1 May 2015. Coordinators will aim to source suitable Work for the Dole activities for participants in both not-for-profit and government sectors.⁴⁴

2.20 In 2014-15, the Department undertook substantial process improvements in relation to the administration of the Fair Entitlements Guarantee programme. These improvements aim to reduce the wait time for workers seeking assistance under the scheme as well as ensure accurate and timely payments.⁴⁵ A total of \$301.04 million was paid to 18 849 claimants under the Fair Entitlements Guarantee during the reporting period.⁴⁶

2.21 The committee considers the Department to have met its reporting obligations and compliments it on a well-structured annual report.

38 Department of Employment, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 8.

39 Department of Employment, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 10.

40 Department of Employment, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 11.

41 Department of Employment, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 3.

42 Department of Employment, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 15.

43 Department of Employment, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 15.

44 Department of Employment, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 11.

45 Department of Employment, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 42.

46 Department of Employment, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 43.

Comcare and Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission

2.22 Comcare and the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission (SRCC) are both established under the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* and jointly oversee the Comcare scheme.⁴⁷ Comcare also has functions and responsibilities under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and is the sole regulator of work health and safety in the scheme.⁴⁸ Comcare's overarching role is to have a positive impact on reducing and preventing injury and harm in the workplace.⁴⁹

2.23 In 2014-15, 6.7 work-related injury claims per 1000 FTE employees were recorded by the Comcare scheme, representing a drop of 13 per cent from the previous year.⁵⁰ Comcare also received 10 notifiable worker fatalities; however no death claims were accepted during the reporting period.⁵¹

2.24 Comcare continued to work with industry stakeholders through its Health Benefits for Work (HBoW) programme. The programme aims to promote working as part of recovery from injury or illness.⁵² In early 2015, an HBoW advisory group was established in order to provide strategic direction and support the aims of the programme.⁵³ Comcare also appointed the agency's first Work for Health Advisor to drive engagement in the areas of employment, injury insurance, health and social welfare.⁵⁴

2.25 The committee finds Comcare and the SRCC's annual report to be clearly presented and informative.

Safe Work Australia

2.26 Safe Work Australia is a statutory agency established under the *Safe Work Australia Act 2008*. It is the national body responsible for developing policy strategies

47 Comcare and Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 20.

48 Comcare and Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 20.

49 Comcare and Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 20.

50 Comcare and Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 39.

51 Comcare and Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 39.

52 Comcare and Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 72.

53 Comcare and Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 72.

54 Comcare and Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Commission, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 72.

to improve Australia's work health and safety conditions and workers' compensation.⁵⁵ Safe Work Australia is funded through both the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. While Safe Work Australia does not carry out any regulatory functions in regard to work health and safety, the agency works collaboratively across jurisdictions to carry out its functions in areas including policy development, compliance, research and evaluation.⁵⁶

2.27 Chief Executive Officer, Ms Michelle Baxter, noted the continued reduction in the number of work-related fatalities and serious injury claims during the reporting period. A total of 188 worker fatalities were reported in 2014, representing a reduction of 39 per cent since a peak of 310 in 2007.⁵⁷

2.28 In October 2014, Safe Work Australia piloted the Australian Strategy Virtual Seminar Series. The Virtual Seminar Series is a free online programme aimed at providing information and promoting discussion regarding key themes of the *Australian Work Health and Safety Strategy 2012–2022*.⁵⁸ The pilot program drew on the expertise of national and international industry leaders and academics and was shared through a variety of channels including live panel discussions, pre-recorded video presentations and infographics.⁵⁹

2.29 In line with the agency's *Operational Plan 2014-15*, the evaluation of work health and safety laws continued to be a focus for Safe Work Australia throughout the reporting period. Safe Work Australia completed a number of studies regarding the effectiveness of the model Work Health and Safety (WHS) laws.⁶⁰ These studies encompassed interviews with Australian businesses of all sizes as well as a cost-benefit analysis of the effect of model WHS laws on workers, business and government.⁶¹ Safe Work Australia also undertook work to examine the extent and appropriateness of any 'regulatory burden' that the model WHS laws place on Australian businesses. This work included a Health and Safety at Work Survey involving over 2300 business owners and operators across Australia.⁶²

55 Safe Work Australia, *Annual Report 14-15*, p. 8.

56 Safe Work Australia, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 8.

57 Safe Work Australia, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 10.

58 Safe Work Australia, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 18.

59 Safe Work Australia, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 21.

60 Safe Work Australia, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 28.

61 Safe Work Australia, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 28.

62 Safe Work Australia, *Annual Report 2014-15*, p. 28.

2.30 The Committee thanks Safe Work Australia for a clear and concise annual report.

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Chair