

Quality Council Focus

The National Quality Council (NQC) is a Committee of the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education (MCVTE). The Council plays a key role in bringing together industry, unions, governments, equity groups and providers to oversee and support the quality of vocational and technical education across Australia.

Welcome to the third Quality Council Focus, a regular newsletter from the Chair and Members of the National Quality Council. The Council seeks to strengthen relationships with its key stakeholders, by providing relevant news and updates on progress of work being undertaken by the Council.

Final NQC meeting for 2006

The NQC had its final meeting for the year on 8 December 2006 with major discussion around the outcomes of the November MCVTE meeting; development, transition and implementation issues for the new quality arrangements; protocols for the operation of the NQC; the Transnational quality strategy; endorsement of Training Package processes; stocktake of the high-level review of Training Packages; the AQF Review; Skill sets and Statements of Attainment; the 2006 Workplan progress report; and the draft 2007 Workplan. The meeting concluded with presentations from the Agri-foods Industry Skills Council and the Government Industry Skills Council.

The Council farewelled the outgoing Chair, Stella Axarlis AM and members Gary Collins and Pam Gill.

The new NQC Chair, Mr Patrick McKendry commences in his role from January 2007. As part of this he will also take on the role of the Chair of the TVET Board.

Profile

In each edition of Quality Council Focus, a member of the Council is profiled. This edition will profile the new NQC Chair, Mr Patrick McKendry.

Patrick McKendry, NQC Chair



Patrick McKendry joins the National Quality Council in 2007 as its new Chair. Patrick comes to the role having had many years experience in areas relating to public policy and the retail industry.

In addition to his new role as Chair of the NQC, Patrick is Executive Director of the National Retail Association (NRA), an organisation that provides a range of professional services to industry and represents the interests of the retail sector (Australia's largest employer) to governments, media and the wider community. The NRA has increased its membership from

1,200 to 4,500 businesses across Australia under Patrick's leadership.

Patrick has led public policy for the retail industry and has been the industry's national advocate in major policy issues in the areas of labour market reform and programs, vocational education and training, skills shortages, trade practices and competition policy.

He is a member of the Commonwealth Small Business Forum and the Brisbane Inner City Advisory Committee.

In 2005, Patrick was a member of the Delegation to China/Vietnam with the Federal Member Hon Gary Hardgrave, Minister for Vocational and Technical Education and a member of the Delegation with Queensland Member Hon Tom Barton, Minister for Industrial Relations, Employment and Training.

In 2006 he was appointed by the Queensland Government a Director of the Workers' Compensation Regulatory Authority (Q-Comp) Board and also serves as a member of its Audit Risk Committee.

In September 2006, Patrick was selected to attend the International Labour Organisation (ILO) meeting on social and labour implications of the use of retail technologies in Geneva.

With his wealth of experience in business and policy, Patrick will be an asset to the National Quality Council and the National Training System.

NQC Work Plan achievements

New Quality Framework

MCVTE at their meeting of 17 November 2006 endorsed a number of recommendations put forward by the NQC in regard to new quality arrangements for the Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) system commencing 1 July 2007. These include:

- A set of Essential Standards for Registration to be implemented from 1 July 2007 with RTOs required to agree to the Conditions of Registration by signing and submitting them to its registering body prior to 1 July 2007 (Registering bodies will be in contact with RTOs on the process for this to occur)
- An Excellence Level to be available for implementation by RTOs on a voluntary basis from 1 January 2008
- A set of revised Standards for Registering Bodies that will achieve national consistency in application of the Essential Standards for Registration and outcomes-based auditing
- A separate set of Standards for Course Accrediting Bodies
- The collection and recording of a small number of agreed outcomes measures by RTOs to be in place from 1 July 2007; the systems for collection and recording to be developed in close consultation with the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET), TAFE Directors Australia (TDA), and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and be agreed by 1 April 2007.

NQC work around the new quality arrangements arose from a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) commitment to improve the quality of training. COAG made particular note of the need to focus on training outcomes, ensure national consistency of the revised arrangements, and improve the confidence of licensing bodies in the quality of training.

The new quality arrangements will be known as the Australian Quality

Training Framework (AQTF) 2007 and will be overseen by a Standing Committee of the NQC with secretariat support provided by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). The Quality Standing Committee will play an important role in providing leadership to the change management process; planning and monitoring to ensure the resources are adequate and appropriately targeted for successful implementation of the new arrangements; and monitoring implementation and advising the NQC of performance and improvement issues.

Membership of the Quality Standing Committee for 2007 is Rebecca Cross (Chair, DEST), David Collins (NSW), Patricia Neden (Vic), Di Orr (Qld), Ann Doolette (SA), Mike Brough (Tas), Mary Ballantine (WA), Anne Houghton (ACT), Pat Forward (Union), Mary Hicks (Employers), member from TDA (yet to be appointed) and Julie Moss (ACPET). Fully participating observers, without the power to vote include a representative of occupation licensing bodies and a member of the NQC Secretariat.

The Quality Standing Committee has agreed to publish regular updates on the training.com.au website and through the Australian Training *Fast Facts* newsletter as part of a soon to be finalised communication strategy.

Reframing the Future reviewed

It was reported in the October *Quality Council Focus* that a review of the Reframing the Future program had been completed as requested by MCVTE. This was considered by MCVTE at their November meeting. Endorsement was provided for the NQC position that the intent and purpose of a nationally funded professional development program is to provide strategic capacity building at the national level, aligned to the COAG agenda, that:

- Supports innovation and responsiveness to emerging skill needs and trends

- Supports the further development of practitioners' understanding of competency based training and assessment, and innovative ways in which Training Packages can be used, and
- Develops the skills of RTOs and practitioners to support the NQC quality arrangements

Existing governance arrangements for Reframing the Future will continue for 2007 with transition to new contestable arrangements for program management from 2008. The NQC (or one of the NQC's standing committees) will be the steering committee for the program and will provide annual advice to the program manager on the national priorities for the development of the VTE workforce.

Employability Skills Update

Following consideration of the Allen Consulting Group report, 'Assessment and reporting of employability skills in Training Packages', the NQC agreed to further work being undertaken as part of the 2006 Workplan including the:

- establishment of an assessment/reporting model for employability skills, building on the Allen Consulting Report;
- piloting of the model; and
- development of a professional development strategy to facilitate implementation of the model, based on initial national work being consolidated by States/Territories

An NQC project reference group has been established with membership including: Julie Moss (ACPET, Chair), Mary Hicks (ACCI), Barry Peddle (TDA), Chris Stewart (VIC), Mary Ballantine (WA), Catherine Vandermark (DEST), Suzi Hewlett (SA) and Helen Eastburne (DEST) to oversee the project and provide advice and guidance to the consultant, Dr John Mitchell.

A detailed draft assessment and reporting model has been developed for consultation and piloting which includes: rationale and guiding

principles; an explanation of the nature of employability skills and the way in which their being embedded in Training Packages impacts on strategies for learning, assessment and reporting; an agreed approach to the assessment and reporting of employability skills; teaching, learning, assessing and reporting strategies; checklists of actions for different stakeholders; and lists of skills required by, and professional development strategies for, those involved in implementing the model.

Consultations have confirmed strong support for the draft model (which will continue to be refined through the piloting process) which is consistent with the Allen Consulting Report and involves:

- (i) an integrated approach to assessment, where the assessment of employability skills is conducted in an integrated manner with technical skills within a qualification and the corresponding units of competency. This integrated approach is made possible because employability skills are being embedded progressively in all Training Packages; and
- (ii) descriptive reporting, where short text is used to describe the nature of the employability skills developed as part of a qualification or unit of competency. To ensure the burden of reporting is minimised, the information reported would relate to the qualification, not the individual.

Piloting has been conducted through 'scenario testing' which has involved the consultant working with a sample of RTOs across two states/territories (WA and VIC) and identifying a range of different scenarios where the model can be tested. A variety of scenarios have been examined in order to make improvements to the draft model.

As no Training Packages have yet been endorsed with employability skills embedded, draft copies of four Training Packages (Retail, Maritime, Health and Meat) which have reached the final DEST evaluation stage have been used in the scenario testing.

The draft assessment and reporting model will be refined further as a

result of the scenario testing and a professional development strategy and materials for initiating it will be developed early in 2007. Subject to endorsement by the project reference group, the draft professional development strategy and materials will be trialled and evaluated through initiation projects in two states in February/March 2007. It is anticipated that the project will be completed by April 2007.

Skill Sets and Statements of Attainment

At the NQC meeting of 30 June 2006, NQC members provided a definition of skill sets and guidance around their use and how they should be described in a Statement of Attainment. Since then, work has been undertaken by Mitch Cleary of Precision Consulting as part of the agreed 2006 NQC Workplan to implement the policy decision.

The Training Package Development Handbook has been updated to include information on skill sets and Statements of Attainment. The updated information is located in Part 2, Chapter 4 and is available from the DEST website. DEST has emailed all Industry Skills Council (ISC) CEOs and State/Territory Training Authority (STA) representatives to inform them it is there.

The Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board (AQFAB) has been consulted regarding implementation of the new processes and the wording for Statements of Attainment. Consultation raised an issue around the need for clarity in the wording for Statements of Attainment and the NQC agreed at the 8 December meeting that advice to AQFAB should be 'that all Statements of Attainment to include the wording "A Statement of Attainment is issued by an RTO when an individual has completed one of more units of competency from nationally recognized qualification(s)/ course(s)."

Consultation has occurred with the National Training Statistics Committee and also NCVER who have advised that it is already possible under the AVETMISS to report on completions of a unit or combination of units.

A communication and professional development strategy inclusive of information for the full range of stakeholders including industry and regulatory/licensing bodies has been developed and agreed by the NQC for delivery nationally during February, March and April 2007.

Stocktake of the High Level Review of Training Packages

In framing the 2006 Workplan, the NQC included provision for a stocktake of progress against recommendations from the High Level Review of Training Packages the outcomes of which would inform the 2007 NQC Workplan. Workplace Agenda (Wendy Katz) undertook the stocktake and provided a report for the consideration of the NQC at its meeting of 8 December 2006.

The report identified:

- progress made, including where appropriate advice about the extent and nature of progress made;
- any gaps in recommendations not yet actioned or only partially actioned;
- a methodology for areas identified through the stocktake that warrant more detailed assessment and evaluation; and
- any related linkages or implications for other parts of the NQC's Workplan.

NQC members agreed some good progress had been made but that the COAG agenda was the driving force now and there was a need to pull out the outstanding work from the High Level Review which remains relevant in the light of the new agenda and a forward thinking approach to the national training system.

Improvements to the Training Package development and endorsement process and continued improvements to National Training Information Service (NTIS) were seen as high priorities, and members agreed to consider a paper linking the outcomes of the Stocktake to the 2007 NQC Workplan priorities.

Members also agreed on the establishment of a Training Packages Standing Committee of NQC to take

this work forward. Membership of the Training Packages Standing Committee for 2007 is Megan Lilly (Employer) and Patricia Neden (Vic) as co-Chairs, Julie Moss (Provider), Pat Forward (Union), Mary Hicks (Employer), Rebecca Cross (DEST), Mike Brough (Tas). Victoria has agreed to provide secretariat support to the Standing Committee.

NQC engages with Industry Skills Councils

As part of regular presentations by ISCs on particular skill needs of their industries and any issues around the development, implementation or review of Training Packages, the NQC heard presentations by the Agri-Food Industry Skills Council and the Government and Community Safety Industry Skills Council at their December meeting.

Mr John Baker (Chair) and Mr Arthur Blewitt (CEO) of the Agri-Foods Industry Skills Council provided a snapshot of the broad constituency represented by the Agri-Food Industry Skills Council – industries as diverse as food/beverage/ pharmaceutical, meat processing, racing and rural-related industries. Mr Baker noted that the industries represented by the Agri-Foods ISC contribute 800,000 employees to the workforce and provide 23% of the national export income.

He identified some of the challenges associated with the industries represented including major skills and workforce shortages in regional and remote Australia, continued competition with metropolitan and urban Australia for a share of a stretched workforce, the ongoing need for 30,000 additional workers per year over the next three to cover new jobs and replacements for an ageing workforce and high staff turnover.

In the face of the Australia-wide skills shortage, the Agri-Foods ISC hopes to employ strategies to counteract the issues addressed by seeking short and long-term solutions to skills and workforce needs including initiatives to enhance employability skills and workforce participation– such as, forming integrated frameworks to rationalise and merge Training Packages and developing flexible and

current Training Packages including cross-industry portability of skills and qualifications.

Ms Jan Andrews (Chair) accompanied by Mr Nick Crosling (CEO), of the Government and Community Safety Industry Skills Council commenced her portion of the presentation by giving a brief history of the ISC and the sectors covered which include Local Government, Public Safety, the Public Sector, Corrections, and Water. She noted that some of the key initiatives for the ISC were to assist the constituents' workforce with the skills for transition from school to work, and career pathways including continuous skills development.

Ms Andrews identified the key performance indicators of the ISC and the importance with which they are viewed by the organisation. She noted that these are primarily measurement against progress in Training Package priority areas particularly the rationalisation of the number of Training Packages, incorporation of employability skills, and development of cross industry competencies, strong engagement with small, medium and large enterprises and state advisory bodies, formal consultative mechanisms with training providers and equity groups including ISC membership or other methods of engagement, effective support mechanisms for RTOs seeking to deliver Training Packages and forging strong links with the NQC.

Finally, she noted the challenges ahead for 2007 including the need to strengthen industry representation and influence in governance structures, streamline Training Package endorsement processes, clarify the inconsistencies in state and territory interpretations and application of the VTE system and the need for government management to provide leadership in the development of its own workforce through the policies of the VTE system.

NQC Meeting Date

The NQC will hold its next meeting on Thursday 29 March 2007.

ACRONYMS

- AEI** Australian Education International
- AESOC** Australian Education Systems Officials Committee
- AQF** Australian Qualifications Framework
- AQFAB** Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board
- AQTF** Australian Quality Training Framework
- AVETMISS** Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard
- COAG** Council of Australian Governments
- DEST** Department of Education, Science and Training
- ISC** Industry Skills Council
- MCVTE** Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education
- NSOC** National Senior Officials Committee
- NISC** National Industry Skills Committee
- NTIS** National Training Information Service
- NCVER** National Centre for Vocational Education Research
- NQC** National Quality Council
- MCEETYA** Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
- RTO** Registered Training Organisation

NQC Website under construction

An NQC website is currently under development as part of a broader communications strategy that will engage key stakeholders on progress in the implementation of the NQC Workplan, as well as outcomes and decisions taken at meetings. Stay tuned for further updates.

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