

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 second 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.

From the Chair...

Much has been communicated over the years on human capital and the need to invest in the development of skills and knowledge of our people whether it be as individuals, enterprises or governments. Most recently the human capital agenda has been taken up by the Council of Australian Governments in consideration of future reforms to VTE and as a possible organising framework for resourcing them. As well as technical and occupational skills, human capital can be seen to encompass more broadly all of the skills, knowledge, personal capabilities and intangible knowledge accumulated in workplaces, and the acquisition of new skills and knowledge through informal and non formal learning, through personal experience, mentoring, feedback and by learning from others.

Broader notions of competency including personal competency require us to think about outcomes in terms of broad skills and capabilities of individuals and their capacity to effectively participate in the labour market of the future, not just in terms of current occupational roles and tasks.

By implication the next generation of Training Packages will need to provide the flexibility and adaptability that industry and employers are looking for. This means that ultimately we need to move away from traditional "industry siloed" competencies and recognize that Training Packages need to deliver qualifications and skill sets that

make workers "cross-industry competent", with both technical skills and broad skills related to personal capability, creativity, innovation and problem solving. This is in line with current NQC work which seeks to rationalize units, qualifications and Training Packages, and to incorporate employability skills, and options for clustering of skills where there is industry need, which is just the start of the changes we will see that will position Training Packages to meet the needs of the future workforce.

Behind this thinking is the imperative for the VTE system to be able to respond, and respond quickly to the need for new units, and clusters of skills, while preserving the integrity of full industry-recognised national qualifications.

In undertaking this work we are not placing at risk the gains of the 1990's which are recognized internationally and have contributed to the nation's strong economic performance. We are seeking to build on and improve what we already have.

Since the last newsletter, I have had the opportunity to make a number of key presentations to move forward and highlight the important work of the NQC. These include the ACPET national conference, NISC and MCVTE. In addition, TVET Australia has now been formally established and officially launched by Australian Government Minister Gary Hardgrave on the 4th October. I have also been closely involved in further development of the Outcomes Based Audit Model as part of the new Quality Framework arrangements.

As always, my thanks and appreciation to all Council Members for their dedication and commitment to quality outcomes and the continuous improvement of the National Training System.

Stella Axarlis AM

Profile

In each edition of Quality Council Focus, a member of the Council is profiled. This edition will profile Council Member, Ralph Leutton.

Ralph Leutton, NQC Member



Ralph Leutton is the Program Manager, Policy and Legislation for Cotton Australia. Mr. Leutton came to the cotton industry after holding the position of Chief Executive Officer of the Queensland Dairyfarmers Organisation for a period of seven and a half years. He holds a Masters Degree in Immuno-Parasitology and has held positions in research in university and government departments. He has been a Senior Lecturer in International Marketing Skills and a successful event organiser with credits including Expo 88, Beef 88 and Beef 91.

As a skilled Trainer, Mr. Leutton has facilitated numerous strategic planning and group dynamics workshops in both rural and voluntary organisations. He has facilitated many discussions and debates focused on key issues impacting directly on primary producers.

In Cotton Australia, his key focus is the development of realistic and achievable policy statements that meet the criteria of the triple bottom line - environment, economic and social. This is being achieved through a careful process of consultation involving stakeholders from both inside and outside of the industry.

Ralph brings this wealth of skills, knowledge and experience to his position as a Member of the National Quality Council.

NQC Work Plan achievements

New Quality Framework

Work is on track to meet all COAG timelines – a new outcomes-based standards and auditing model by October 2006; with implementation of the model from 1 July 2007. The NQC will report to MCVTE at their November meeting on the proposed model and implementation arrangements.

At the 21 September meeting of the NQC, a number of outstanding issues were resolved for recommendation to MCVTE including the name of the new quality arrangements, the description for registration level standards, the NQC's role in relation to the new quality arrangements, governance arrangements for managing the transition, independent advice to NQC on the operation of RCABs, the collection and recording of a small number of agreed outcomes measures by RTOs, and the establishment of an NQC Standing Committee to oversee the new arrangements.

The new quality framework will provide for registration at what is being described as an essential level – a requirement for all RTOs – and a subsequent level that provides opportunities for RTOs to focus on enhanced quality outcomes through continuous improvement. Recognition for achievement of excellence at this level will be through a voluntary assessment process.

Transition to the new standards and auditing model will mean significant changes for both RTOs and State and Territory jurisdictions, and will require substantial investment in time and effort to build the capacity of people working with the new arrangements. A strategy for transition and implementation will need to build in strong leadership and guidance at the national, state and territory levels to ensure national consistency in implementation, and investment that goes beyond the framework to capacity building.

COAG made particular note of the need to ensure national consistency of the revised arrangements as well as higher levels of engagement of industry licensing bodies. The principal means for achieving this will be through revised standards for registering bodies and supporting agreements and documents. In addition a number of other initiatives will be developed including:

- Ensuring a higher level of participation of industry, regulatory and licensing bodies in audit arrangements, informed by current State/Territory processes for working with licensing and regulatory bodies for example as used in Queensland;
- Processes to support decisions about the targeting, frequency, scope and depth of audits being made using a nationally agreed approach to risk management which focuses on a range of agreed risks including:
 - Performance against outcomes measures
 - The delivery of qualifications in areas subject to licenses
 - Multi-site delivery including across jurisdictions, and
 - Offshore delivery.
- Nationally agreed competency requirements for auditors and audit teams;
- National auditor handbook and audit resources implemented with a national professional development program and audit moderation strategy;
- Nationally agreed sanctions and conditions and processes for their more expeditious application.
- Nationally agreed guidelines on the interpretation of registration standards and compliance with registering body requirements;
- Establishment of a committee of registering body officials to monitor implementation of the standards (based on information from registering bodies as well as information from key stakeholders), advise auditors on nationally agreed

interpretations of the standards and to plan and coordinate moderation activities; and

- A refined process for ensuring national consistency is achieved in the implementation of the new arrangements. The new process will mirror that being established for RTOs and include reporting by registering bodies against agreed performance measures to judge the effectiveness of regulatory outcomes and client services, and the continuation of the practice of independent review.

Reframing the Future reviewed

The NQC has completed a review of the *Reframing the Future* program as requested by MCVTE, and will provide a report and recommendations to the 17 November 2006 meeting of MCVTE for their consideration.

Reframing the Future is the national staff development and change management program designed to build a highly skilled and professional VTE workforce, capable of supporting a quality and integrated national VTE system.

The review was undertaken by Prof Rod McDonald, a consultant with the Ithaca Group, and was informed by key stakeholder interviews, discussions with key informants, an invitational "Think Tank", and submissions invited from across the sector using the discussion paper as a means of focusing feedback.



Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The COAG agreement to improve RPL uptake and practice to ensure that workers do not have to repeat or undertake training for skills they have already acquired will assist businesses and individuals to make the most of their existing skill base.

DEST has received proposals from the States and Territories for the joint three-year Australian, State and Territory Governments' RPL programme to build the training system's capacity to deliver quality RPL and drive good practice.

The proposals identify a range of projects and strategies to address the barriers to achieving improved practice and increased uptake of RPL. These include:

- Creating Industry Partnership Initiatives – which acknowledge the formation of strong industry partnerships as being central to implementing robust RPL practice;
- RPL Professional Development Strategies – which acknowledge that building the capability of assessors and auditors will lead to improvements in the practice and/or take-up of RPL, and ensure the confidence of employers and individuals in the RPL process;
- Skill Recognition Services – which provide a range of accessible services to engage industry, providers and individuals in the RPL process;
- RPL Promotion Strategies – which promote RPL as an accepted pathway to a qualification;
- RPL Resources – that develop resources and tools to assist and support the delivery of quality, streamlined RPL.

DEST will be advising the NQC of the agreed State and Territory projects and their progress at the NQC meeting on 8 December 2006.

Strategic industry audit of the hospitality sector

The National Report on the Strategic Industry Audit of Training in the Hospitality Industry is ready for printing and will be distributed shortly. The NQC is collaborating with the Services Industry Skills Council to develop an action plan for professional development initiatives to follow up on the findings and recommendations included in the report.

Assessment of Employability Skills

Since the report Employability Skills for the Future was officially launched by Dr Brendan Nelson (the then Minister for Education, Science and Training) on 23 May 2002, a great deal has been achieved in developing and implementing an agreed approach to incorporating employability skills into Training Packages. Feedback from Quality Assurance panelists would suggest that the work to ensure Employability Skills are explicit and embedded within Training Packages is on track, and meeting the established quality criteria.

At the most recent NQC meeting, NQC members endorsed a way forward that will result in the development of an agreed model for the assessment and reporting of Employability Skills in Training Packages. The model will build on the options provided by The Allen Consulting Group in a report to the NQC in March this year. A working group of NQC has been established to oversee the development of an agreed model which will be undertaken by Dr John Mitchell, an experienced and highly respected consultant in VTE. Once a model has been agreed by NQC at their December meeting, it will be piloted with a number of RTOs. A professional development strategy, workshop resources and a range of customizable materials will be developed – the strategy to include exemplar projects to demonstrate the successful application of employability skills in industry contexts.

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 Innovation & Business and Manufacturing Industry Skills Councils at their September meeting.

Mr David Hoare (Chair) and Mr Bob Paton (CEO) of the Manufacturing Industry Skills Council provided a snapshot of the manufacturing industry and presented issues the Council was tackling including the need to increase higher level skills and high-level entry, and the need to build on the existing skills base and recognise skills already held using RPL. Mr Paton described the Council's strategic approach to Training Package rationalisation and provided examples of the approach in relation to the Manufacturing Training Package MSA06 which is now ready for endorsement, with Certificate I Pathways as the first qualification to populate.

Mr John Vines (Chair) and Ms Sharon Coates (CEO) of the Innovation & Business Industry Skills Council also provided a snapshot of the IBSA industries and stressed the need to move away from traditional "industry siloed" competencies and recognize that Training Packages need to deliver qualifications and skill sets that make workers "cross-industry competent", with both technical skills and broad skills related to creativity, innovation and problem solving. In meeting this need Ms Coates commented that IBSA have been exploring and testing different processes for developing units of competency, skills clusters and qualifications, while fulfilling their Training Package development and review functions. This has involved embracing the evidence of workforce convergence and complexity, listening to the messages coming from industry and individuals, and challenging the traditional view of Training Packages as the best construct for new and responsive national content.



Ms Coates reported that as a result, many new ideas and opportunities for fresh content are emerging; including a much higher profile and focus on innovation, creativity and design skills across all industry sectors; the development of shared units to reflect technological and occupational convergence; new essential skills in areas such as visual literacy; and new approaches to digital content. Initiatives around international mutual recognition of vocational qualifications, better links to vendor qualifications, and the need for national support for more project-based learning are also highlighting interesting possibilities.

NQC Meeting Date

The NQC will hold its next meeting on Friday 8th December 2006. Items for discussion at the meeting include:

- Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Strategy
- National outcomes based audit model
- Employability Skills - Model for assessment and reporting
- 'Stocktake' of recommendations from the High Level Review of Training Packages.
- Joint presentation by Government Industry Skills Council and Agri-foods Industry Skills Council.

NQC Website under construction

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

Commonwealth Minister Launches TVET Australia

The Australian Minister for Vocational and Technical Education and Training, The Hon Gary Hardgrave MP, launched TVET Australia on Wednesday, 4th October at the Company's St Kilda Road Headquarters in Melbourne.

The launch was also attended by the Victorian Minister for Education and Training, The Honourable Lynne Kosky

MP; the Chair of the National Industry Skills Committee, Mr Bill Stoddart; and the Vice Chancellor of Monash University, Professor Richard Larkins, to name a few.

TVET Australia Chair, Stella Axarlis announced to the gathering that Technical and Vocational Education and Training or TVET is the UNESCO term to describe the area we know as VTE, VET or VE&T. The term was adopted by participants at the 1999 TVET World Congress, who decided it was the most comprehensive term for the broad scope of activities.

Ms Axarlis spoke about the changing nature of Australia's skill requirements and how governments, employers and individuals all need to approach skill-building over the coming years. She emphasized that 'quality' must be the key by which policy reform and strategies are developed.

"The major objective of the system must be that it answers the call for a skills development system which is nationally consistent, of highest quality, with portability of qualifications across State and Territory borders."

"Responsibilities for learning must be shared among individuals, employers and governments. Arrangements need to be transparent, with information available to all parties about courses, the quality of providers and the nature of qualifications," said Ms Axarlis.

At the very outset, TVET Australia will deliver against four key goal areas in support of the National Training System:

- Provide responsive and high quality support services to the National Industry Skills Committee;
- Provide support services to the National Quality Council to enable it to deliver against its mandate on quality assurance, giving national effect to qualifications, consistency and training package endorsement;
- Establishment of TVET Australia Products and Service's 'One-Stop-Shop' to provide an invaluable, single access point for practitioners and administrators of VTE by uniting the functions and services of ATP and AEShareNet;

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

- The ongoing development and execution of strategies for the continuous improvement of services and systems for the National Training System.

For further information please contact Nigel Raines, Public Relations & Corporate Marketing Manager, TVET Australia

nigel.raines@tvetaustralia.com.au
 Phone: (03) 9832 8113
 Mobile: 0412 152 768