



## From the President



Welcome to A-news. It has been a busy year for the VET community. Governments, public and private training providers, industry sectors and communities have been working to implement a range of changes to help build the capacity of the Australian workforce. Ensuring that education at all levels is well placed to deliver required basic and more specialised skills and knowledge has become an important discussion in Australia and will continue into 2017. This dialogue will become more prominent as we keep on applying ourselves to the task of balancing public and private investment in education and training, raising the excellence of training provision, and ensuring equality of opportunity and access. It will also be important to focus on building strong core skills in numeracy and a range of key literacies as well as in specialised skills needed by current and future workforces.

It's always an honour to welcome you to share the work of VET researchers, administrators and commentators, who seek to ask questions that might be difficult or challenging, report findings that might counter-intuitive or uncomfortable and help everyone involved in education, workforce and economic development to make decisions based on evidence. This edition highlights the importance of publicising

training activity at training provider level to enable users of training to make 'informed choices'. It also presents discussions about some of the issues that have been of concern to the funding and financing of VET, and provides some policy updates and links to stories that have been making the news. You will also find some dates about conferences for 2017 at home and abroad, and information on the VET Development Centre and its new CEO.

The world of work, education and VET will continue to change for all of us. AVETRA has invested in ensuring the 2017 AVETRA Conference in Melbourne on 18-20 April will be an opportunity to come together and have thoughtful conversations about the future of VET informed by the best research and VET experience. Along with the AVETRA executive, I welcome your engagement in delivering presentations or papers about your research and participating in keynote presentations, plenary sessions, general discussions and social media. Together we can ensure VET has a strong and informed voice in our future.

On behalf of the AVETRA Executive please accept our very best wishes for a happy, relaxed and fun-filled Christmas break and great New Year.

*Ruth Wallace  
President of AVETRA,  
Northern Institute, 2016*

## A MINUTE WITH Rod Camm, CEO ACPET: A new approach to transparency in VET



Let's learn the lessons – the VET sector needs a new approach to transparency

On writing this piece I did contemplate the many issues my reflections might touch on. VET reform, Higher Education funding or the emergence of international education as a stand out in our economy are issues all worthy of consideration. However I have chosen to focus on the fundamental need to enable student choice, more importantly informed student choice, because if we get that element right the rest should fall into place.

Quite a few weeks ago the Productivity Commission issued its Preliminary Findings Report into *Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice into Human Services: Identifying Sectors for Reform*. This report builds on the Competition Policy Review (Harper Review) conducted in 2015 that included a section which considered competition, contestability and user choice in the human services sector. While the Productivity Commission report mostly focuses on identifying the sectors that should be a priority for greater contestability and user choice, it also highlights the failings of the VET FEE-HELP program as an example of how 'not to' deliver contestability in the human

services sector. The federal government's failure to provide appropriate stewardship of the program, along with weak price signals and a lack of accessible information, are identified as key reasons for the VET FEE-HELP mess. Interestingly, changes of this type are not features in the new VSL program.

The need for 'informed' user choice is one that is prominent in the report. As the report says 'Increased availability and use of human services data is necessary to realise the potential benefits from greater competition, contestability and user choice. To make informed choices, users need to understand the range of services that are available to them. Providers require data to analyse and improve their services. Governments need data to identify community needs and expectations, the demand for services and gaps in service provision'.

More recently, at the inaugural TEQSA Conference held in Melbourne a number of eminent speakers including Professor Peter Shergold and Dr Alan Finkel focused on the importance of informed students and transparency to the long term integrity of the sector. Peter Shergold, of course, chairs the Higher Education Standards Panel that has released its report into improving the transparency of higher education admissions. Once again the need for informed choice was pivotal to the recommendations of the report. It seems to me there are some interesting and divergent approaches being adopted to information transparency across the tertiary education and training sector.

The full-year higher education student data published by the Department of Education and Training includes outcome measures for each provider – not just universities. So as well as the data on their student numbers, we can see how successful each of these (Higher Education Support Act approved) providers was in transitioning their students through courses. Combined with the information available through the Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching (QILT) we have some useful information that can help assist students make better informed choices.

In the VET sector, the publication of provider data is generally only available at the aggregate level. So while we know the quantum of training by a range of dimensions and overall completion rates, we don't have the details of provider activity and which providers are delivering strong outcomes and those that may not be achieving the best for their students. The availability of VET data was very much under consideration through the recent Review of the Vocational Education and

Training (VET) Data Policy – essentially, the policy that governs the collection and dissemination of VET data. The current Policy is symptomatic of governance in VET – confusing.

Mostly, VET providers send their government-funded student data to the relevant states and territories (with it being on-forwarded to NCVER on a periodic basis and not immediately) with fee-for-service data being either forwarded direct to NCVER or to the provider's respective state/territory for on forwarding to NCVER - with a range of reporting requirements and timeframes. This ensures the data is dated by the time it is all submitted. Of particular interest, given the increasing focus on quality and student outcomes, are the current restrictions that mean the NCVER is severely hamstrung in its ability to share this information with other government agencies and regulators, students and the broader community. However, the recent damage to the sector caused by some program failures and the actions of a minority of providers means we need to do more to improve the transparency of the VET sector so that students (particularly), governments and the community can have real confidence in its quality and outcomes. That's why I believe there need to be some fundamental changes.

It is time for the publication of VET data that is meaningful to all the users of our system – and especially students. This means information on program outcomes and student and employer satisfaction (where relevant) at the provider level. The current aggregated data on these measures adds little to informing student choice and the broader market. It certainly doesn't help the transparency that is so critical to re-building community confidence in a sector that has been damaged by the recent program failings.

So while I am pleased to see the heightened and more timely reporting that will accompany the new VET Student Loans program, this approach needs to be applied across the VET sector. It is also important to consider how the information is published. It is not reasonable to expect students to navigate complex government-centric web sites and reports. A student-friendly solution involving interactive apps and web sites will be more effective. The approach taken in the higher education sector, including through the QILT initiative, provides guidance on a possible direction. There are legitimate industry concerns about the publication of simplistic or limited measures like completion rates. There is the risk of the misinterpretation of this data and the manipulation of outcomes.

To address these concerns and provide meaningful data for students and others, a broader suite of measures need to be developed and reported at provider level. This could include student enrolments, in training, cancellations, course and module completions and employment and other outcomes, along with student satisfaction. Noting some data limitations and the concerns that arise in relation to reporting fee-for-service activity, this approach could initially focus on government-funded activity with providers able to 'opt in' in regard to their fee-for-service activity. This approach though should not weaken the resolve for full transparency as soon as possible.

As I noted above, there are a range of reporting timeframes depending on program funding source and jurisdiction. These arrangements are based on historical developments rather than a contemporary approach to data management. They are no longer fit-for-purpose. It is not satisfactory that we can't produce point in time data reports at any time. To address the complexity of reporting there needs to be a single data reporting repository and the opportunity for real time reporting by providers. That is, subject to meeting minimum reporting timeframes, providers should be able to forward data at a time that best aligns to their other student enrolment and management processes. That would mean a constantly updating data set and subsequent reporting.

Let's hope that we learn the lessons of the recent failings and recognise the important role that greater transparency must play in restoring student and community confidence in the VET sector and supporting informed choice. Greater transparency and availability of data that is meaningful to a range of stakeholders might also better inform contributions to policy development and the broader VET reform agenda.

## AVETRA welcomes Assistant Minister Karen Andrews

**Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills the Hon. Karen Andrews was appointed to the position on Monday 18 July this year.**

She comes to the portfolio after serving as Assistant Minister for Science.

In taking up her new position she said

'I am honoured to be appointed as the Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills.

Vocational education is central to Australia's economic growth and business productivity. One in four working aged Australians are enrolled in one of the 4600 registered training organisations that deliver Vocational Education and Training in Australia.

Australia needs quality apprentices to build the infrastructure of the future and repair the infrastructure of the past. Apprenticeships provide thousands of Australians with the training and work experience to set them up in a career, and the skilled workforce our local businesses need to succeed.

I now have a great opportunity to work closely with the Minister for Education and Training, Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham to create positive outcomes for Australians undertaking vocational education.'

<http://www.karenandrewsmp.com.au/Newsroom/Media/ID/832/Appointment-as-the-Assistant-Minister-for-Vocational-Education-and-Skills>



## AVETRA farewells Mr. Chris Robinson, Chief Commissioner and CEO, Australian Quality Skills Authority (ASQA) who retires at the end of the year



Chief Commissioner Chris Robinson will retire on December 31, 2016 after five years at the helm of the Australian Quality Skills Authority (ASQA). He will be succeeded by Mr. Mark Paterson current ASQA Commissioner, Regulatory Operations.

Mr. Robinson was appointed to the role of Acting Chief Commissioner of ASQA from 1 July 2011, and took up the role of Chief Commissioner from 1 October 2011 for a period of five years.

He retires after a long and successful career in a range of senior government positions in education and related fields, including Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Education and Children's Services,

South Australia, and Deputy Director-General of the Department of Employment and Training, Queensland. Prior to this he was Managing Director of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, and before this held senior executive roles in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and in Australian Government departments responsible for education and training. He also spent time working in the Department of Employment and Training in the United Kingdom.

AVETRA wishes Mr. Robinson all the best for his retirement and thanks him for all the work and energy he applied in helping to establish the association in the early days.

### Sharing research tools and resources



Have you visited the Educator Hub site recently? <http://avetraeducatorhub.org/just-like-avetra-this-hub-is-set-up-to-bring-australias-vet-research-community-together/>

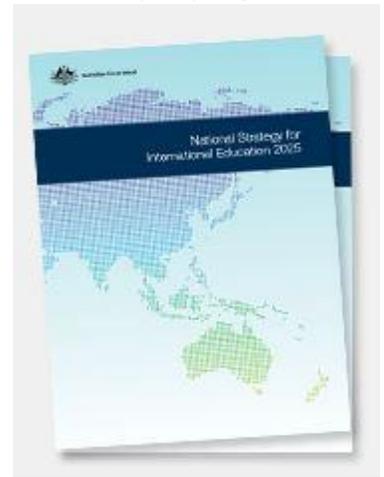
There are links to the AVETRA research tools and other current research issues, a blog to discuss your research, and an opportunity to network with other researchers/inquirers in the VET sector. The Hub is free, so we hope you will involve yourselves. Linda Simon, AVETRA Executive member

## International Education: new strategy and governance arrangements

International education is a \$19 billion a year industry; it accounts for around 130,000 jobs and is seen as a key 'super growth' sector. On April 30, 2016, the Senator Hon Richard Colbeck launched the *National Strategy for International Education 2025*; at the same time he announced the establishment of a new *Council for International Education*.

The strategy [nsie.education.gov.au](http://nsie.education.gov.au) is based on:

- 'strengthening the basic fundamentals' of the Australian system for education, training, and research and arrangements for regulation, quality assurance and consumer protection.
- developing 'transformative partnerships' between 'people' and domestic and overseas institutions, and governments
- capitalising on global opportunities to provide education and skills development



The International Education sector, AUSTRADE, and other government agencies have also worked together to develop a roadmap. This aims to set out routes required to grow the sector for the long-term 'by identifying what we collectively need to do to excel globally on a scale like never before' <http://www.austrade.gov.au/Australian/Education/Services/australian-international-education-2025/AIE2025-roadmap>. An alumni engagement strategy has been established to 'foster a global alumni community that actively engages and promotes Australia and advances our national interests, especially in the Indo-Pacific region' <https://globalalumni.gov.au/globalalumniengagementstrategy.aspx> or <http://dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/global-alumni/Pages/global-alumni.aspx>.

The aim of the Council for International Education is to implement the strategy, the roadmap; and the alumni program. Minister Birmingham will be the chair of the council; he will be joined by Australian Government ministers with responsibilities in international education. Minister Birmingham announced that the members of the Council comprised:

- Professor Kent Anderson - Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Community & Engagement), University of Western Australia
- Mr. Brett Blacker - CEO, English Australia
- Ms. Sue Freeman - CEO and Managing Director, First Impressions Resources
- The Hon Phil Honeywood - CEO, International Education Association of Australia
- Ms. Tracey Horton - Incoming Chair, Navistar
- Ms. Karyn Kent - CEO, StudyAdelaide
- Ms. Nina Khairina - President, Council of International Students Australia
- Mr. Gerald Lipman - Chief Executive, International College of Hotel Management
- Mr. David Riordan - Director of City Operations, City of Sydney
- Ms. Belinda Robinson - CEO, Universities Australia, and
- Mr. Derek Scott - Principal and CEO, Haileybury

To view the Road Map please visit <http://www.austrade.gov.au/Australian/Education/Services/australian-international-education-2025/AIE2025-roadmap>

## A new CEO for the VET Development Centre: Martin Powell

In January 2016 Martin Powell became CEO of the VET Development Centre (VDC) in Victoria. Before joining the VDC, Martin was with the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) where he was the National Manager, Services and Victorian Executive Officer. Prior to this he was Director of the National VET Equity Advisory Council (NVEAC), the COAG advisory committee responsible for independent social policy advice for those groups at risk of disadvantage.

The VDC is a Public Company limited by Guarantee and the Victorian Minister for Education and Training is the principal shareholder. The VDC was established in 2005 by the Victorian Government to promote the development and raise the professional standing of people working in the Australian VET Sector. The VDC specialises in providing non accredited training for the VET workforce as well as customised consultancy, management and strategic support services for all VET providers across Australia.



*'The VDC holds a unique position in the Australian VET Sector as the remaining state-based entity that provides specialised non-formal professional development to VET professionals. Since its inception as a Victorian TAFE development centre in 2005, it has evolved to provide services nationally to private RTOs and community based organisations. Coming to the VDC has presented an exciting opportunity to expand the services and impact of the company.'*

With the continuing debate around formalising continuous professional development for VET educators, the VDC has established a solid reputation as a model for responding and supporting professional learning for the sector. The VDC provides ongoing professional development to all teaching and non-teaching staff in the VET Sector across Australia with an extensive range of webinars, workshops, events as well as government funded grants, scholarships and evaluation activities.

*'We are different to other VET Professional Development organisations, in that you don't have to be member to access our PD or resources at a subsidised rate. The VDC Board reinvests any profits into subsidising our major events including breakfasts, VET Leader lunches, network functions and the annual conference to ensure it is accessible and affordable for all providers.'*

The VDC has provided an annual teaching and learning conference for the past 11 years. This is the only conference specifically designed for VET teaching staff. Another point of difference is the important role the VDC plays in the administration of a range of Victorian Government funding initiatives aimed at building VET workforce capacity within organisations funded by the Victorian Training Guarantee (VTG) contract - now known as Skills First. The VDC is also responsible for the administration and evaluation of applications for approved provider lists operating under the Skills First arrangements, including Foundation Skills, RPL and TAE.

Since coming to VDC in January, Martin has introduced a number of initiatives to capitalise on its good reputation and increase the awareness of what it does. In addition to improved messaging and branding of its services, including a new user friendly website integrated with the VDC PD program and refreshed branding, expanded PD offerings focussed beyond the educator have been introduced such as the Executive, Leadership and Management Coaching program. Further, to inform and engage with a broader range of people working in Australia's VET Sector, VDC News commenced in July 2016. VDC News is a new fortnightly e-newsletter that provides a snapshot of the latest policy and events relevant to the VET workforce. For further information on the VDC please visit [www.vdc.edu.au](http://www.vdc.edu.au)

## Linda Simon interviews Professor the Hon. Stephen Martin, Chief Executive of CEDA

Professor the Hon Stephen Martin, is the Chief Executive of the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA), an organisation which provides thought leadership and policy perspectives on the economic and social issues affecting Australia. This is achieved through a rigorous and evidence-based [research agenda](#), and [forums and events](#) that deliver lively debate and critical perspectives.



**Linda:** CEDA released a research report in August 2016, which examines the role of vocational education and training (VET) in meeting the skills needs of Australia. The report was titled; 'VET: securing skills for growth'. Why did CEDA see VET as being one of the important areas to research this year?

**Prof Martin:** The Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector in Australia is a fundamental part of our economy, contributing to Australia's productivity and growth through higher workforce participation. Yet, the sector is akin to the forgotten middle child of the education system.



The VET sector has been under threat with drastically plummeting enrolments in government supported providers and rogue operators threatening the reputation of the sector. Much of the focus on the VET sector in recent years has only been on a small part, usually the demise of rogue operators, and CEDA has undertaken this report because we recognise the importance of this sector as a whole and the need to get policy settings right to ensure it continues to support Australia's economic sustainability.

The other reason is that our major research report last year on the future of work identified that many VET-related occupations are at risk of automation in the next 10-15 years and this will have consequences for the sector. A study commissioned by the Foundation for Young Australians found that 71 per cent of VET students are currently studying or training for occupations where at least two thirds of jobs will be automated over the coming decades.

As a result, the latest report focused primarily on the role of VET in securing Australia's future skill needs given those workforce trends, while also exploring other policy issues with the VET system as a whole.

**Linda:** What were the significant issues that arose from the research and commentary?

**Prof Martin:** The VET FEE-HELP scandal which, while concentrated among only a few private providers, has shaken the public's confidence in the viability and quality of the entire vocational education system, including the public providers and high-quality private providers. There has been quite a significant amount of movement on that front since the launch of the report, particularly with the new VET Student Loans program (to replace VET FEE-HELP) for students and providers due to take effect in January 2017 subject to the passing of legislation. However, as we pointed out at the time, VET FEE-HELP is only one part of the system – VET policy must go beyond that.

Our key recommendation was that the Federal Government, through COAG, should undertake a comprehensive, national review of the VET sector that aims to examine its role in meeting Australia's skills needs, struck a chord with the 'commentariat'. There was broad agreement that a proper review is long overdue.

The other significant issues that arose include:

- Rethinking apprenticeship models to reflect changing workforce needs and patterns;
- Improving VET career advice for students so that VET is seen as a valid alternative to university education;
- Improving data and transparency of data to help stakeholders make more informed decisions;
- Shifting qualifications away from narrowly-defined qualifications; and
- Improving quality and availability of information about the system.

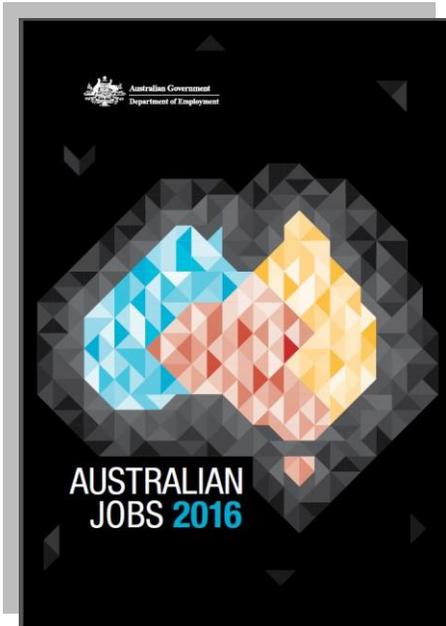
**Linda:** In releasing the report, CEDA held various events around the country and involved a range of stakeholders. What interest was shown by these stakeholders, including government, in this report?

Attendees at the events included senior public servants within the skills and education departments, stakeholders from within the industry – public, private and community providers, but also enterprise providers. There was also interest from Ministers at a state and Federal level. The report is continuing to have traction and CEDA has been approached by various organisations to speak on the report at industry events and conferences.

**Linda:** This report complements CEDA's major report on 'Australia's economic future: agenda for growth' and the recent publication on 'Disruption and Innovation 2011-2016'. Do you think there are ways that CEDA and other organisations such as AVETRA, can continue to link the need for a strong quality VET sector in this country to our economic productivity and growth in skills and innovative industries?

We need to keep talking about the role of the VET sector and the importance of the sector to the entire economy, be it with research reports, events and conferences. It is important for the broader general public to understand the contribution of VET to the education sector and to bust many of the myths that continue to exist around the sector.

## The Australian Labour Market: Australian Jobs 2016



If you want to know about the current state of the Australian labour market then the Commonwealth's Department of Employment recent publications Australian Jobs 2016 is a good place to start.

You can find useful data about national and jurisdictional labour markets (including for females and youth) and jobs for different industries, occupations and qualification levels. You can find data on both existing jobs, declining jobs, and new jobs. You can also read some reflections on the future of work.

Here are some key facts and figures from the report

- As at November 2015 there were 11,855,000 employed persons in part-time or full-time jobs in Australia with 32% of these in regional areas. The labour market is projected to increase by 8.3% over the next five years.
- Sex: 46% of employed individuals are female
- Age: 39% are in the 45 years+ age group, and 15% in the 19-24 years age group
- Industry of employment: largest employing industries are Health Care and Social Assistance, followed by Retail Trade, Construction, and Professional,

Scientific and Technical Services;

- Occupation of employment: Professionals represent the highest occupation of employment followed by Technicians and Trade workers and Clerical and Administrative workers.
- New jobs: industries with largest number of new jobs are Health Care and Social Assistance; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; and Education and Training; occupations with largest number of new jobs: General Clerks; Registered Nurses; General Sales Assistants, Child Carers, and Electricians
- Declining jobs: industries with largest job declines are Manufacturing; Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing; Wholesale Trade; and Electricity Gas, Water and Waste Services;
- Young workers: industries with largest numbers of young workers are Retail Trade; Accommodation and Food Services; and Construction; occupations with large number of young people are General Sales Assistants, Checkout Operators and Office Cashiers; and Waiters
- Female workers: industries with large number of female workers are Health Care and Social Assistance; Retail Trade; and Education and Training; occupations with largest numbers of female workers are General Sales Assistants; Registered Nurses; and General Clerks.
- Trends: Over last 25 years the greatest gains in employment shares are accounted for by Professionals and Community and Personal Service Workers, mainly resulting from increased demand for Health Care and Social Assistance Services due to population ageing and increased female workforce participation

Read the whole report at [https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/australianjobs2016\\_0.pdf](https://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/australianjobs2016_0.pdf)

## The VET Provider Market: Analyses of RTO registrations and total VET activity data

You can learn about the VET Provider Market by reading recent reports published by the NCVER. The publication authored by Patrick Korbelt and Josie Misko tracks the history of the provider market, by looking at the number of providers entering and exiting the market since the mid-1990s. It provides an account of how these markets compare to other education and training markets at home and overseas. The key findings point to the rapid rise of private provision in the mid-1990s, after the opening up of the market for regulated and government-funded training. Since that time the market has remained relatively stable. The VET market is also greater than the market for higher education in terms of numbers of providers and numbers of students. Australia has proportionately more providers per working age population than selected comparator jurisdictions overseas (New Zealand, South Korea, United Kingdom, and Ontario, Canada).



Read the whole report: Patrick Korbelt and Josie Misko 2016, *VET Provider Market Structures: History Growth and Change*, <https://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/publications/all-publications/2871>

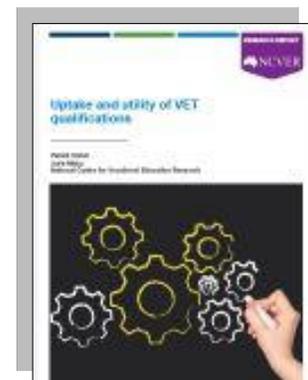
The publication by Alison Anlezark and Paul Foley looks more closely at the Total VET Activity data. This paper explains the reason for collecting a more comprehensive set of data about the total sector. The paper looks at the reported training activity of private and government-funded training providers to see if there is a different mix of provision between the two sectors. It investigates differences in the types of courses being provided, student enrolments, and completions. It suggests how to improve the evidence base for VET policy, noting the quantum of provision.



Read the whole report: Alison Anlezark and Paul Foley 2016, *Making sense of Total VET Activity: an initial market analysis* <https://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/publications/all-publications/making-sense-of-total-vet-activity-an-initial-market-analysis>

Another publication by Patrick Korbelt and Josie Misko considers the use of Training Packages and the qualifications contained within them. It examines the pattern of enrolments in qualifications to see how extensively the qualifications are being used and whether enrolments are evenly spread amongst qualifications or concentrated in particular qualifications and training packages. Finally, the report explores the number of qualifications that could be rationalised or consolidated, including identifying low and zero enrolment qualifications, rules that have been applied in systems looking to stem the proliferation or duplication of qualifications. It looks at the concept of vocational streams and vocational routes, and suggests a model for how to use the ANZSCO classifications for thinking about qualifications that cover related occupational areas.

Read the whole report: Patrick Korbelt and Josie Misko, 2016, *The uptake and utility of VET qualifications*, <https://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/publications/all-publications/uptake-and-utility-of-vet-qualifications>



## Opinion Piece: Linda Simon

### Australian VET in crisis! Are there lessons to be learned from the UK?

For some the crisis in vocational education and training (VET) and the fate of TAFE was a critical issue in the recent Australian Federal elections. For others it hardly made the radar. Unfortunately a number of those others included members of the re-elected Federal Government. Karen Andrews is now the fifth Minister or Assistant Minister responsible for VET since September 2013, bringing another new face to the sector.

The continuing crisis in Australian VET has ranged across many areas. There have been extraordinary rorts by some for-profit private providers using government funded student entitlements and loans as their private cash-cows. Aggressive marketing tactics have lured potential students to sign up to courses that do not deliver a quality education or a useful qualification. In 2015 the cost to the Government of the VET FEE-HELP loans scheme blew out to \$2.9 billion, with the acknowledgement that many students will never earn enough money to pay off these loans, incurring a lifetime's debt. Governments have spoken of the importance of VET to Australia's economic productivity, but government real recurrent expenditure per annual hour for VET has declined 31.5% over the last 10 years. The forward estimates in the 2016-17 budget show a further cut of \$500 million. Apprenticeship numbers are down, and community and industry has lost confidence in VET. On top of this are the continuing cuts to TAFE's funding, facilities and staff, undermining the role of Australia's public VET provider.

A recent report from the UK 'Post-16 Skills Plan', accepted by their government, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education> recognises some of the challenges that Australia has also faced in VET. However the UK has not sought to address the problems by cutting the heart out of the sector, but is looking to have a different conversation. The UK is also concerned about the status of their VET (now technical education) sector, the complexity of the number of providers and qualifications, the standards of some of the courses on offer, and the need to move to higher levels of technical education to meet the need for technician level skills including in STEM areas. Whilst some of the problems may be similar, this does not mean that the answers for the UK are those that we should adopt here. But recommendations in this and other UK reports on skills, apprenticeships and adult learners, can at least provide us with insights as to different conversations that we could engage in.

The UK report sets out to offer young people post-16 an academic and a technical option of education. The technical option offers a college-based technical education which includes a work placement or employment based technical education such as an apprenticeship with at least 20% college-based education. The college based education includes transferable workplace skills. Students have the option of then moving to higher levels of technical education or degree apprenticeships. The technical education qualifications will be simplified into 15 routes, centred on different occupational areas. Quality of all technical education will be regulated by the expanded Institute of Apprenticeships, and standards will be set by panels of experts in those technical areas.

Whilst student loans will be available for some higher level technical qualifications, funding will also be accessed via an employer apprenticeship levy.

In an Australian context, such changes would help to address:

- the need for alternative funding sources. Surely if employers want a say in vocational education standards and outcomes they should also be willing to invest in its success;
- a new status for the VET sector, building on its strengths, rather than making it a poor cousin of the university sector. As the report says VET should not be seen as the dumping ground for those students not taking 'A levels';

- the need to increase the numbers of students attaining higher level VET qualifications in a wide range of vocational areas, not just increased numbers of Diplomas in Business;
- support for VET's role in building innovation in Australian industry; and
- the need to diversify apprenticeship opportunities for young people and to take apprenticeships into degree qualifications.

The report also acknowledges that the social impact of an effective technical education sector needs to be recognised, not just the economic outcomes. Targets are recommended for involvement of equity groups, including an increase in the numbers of women taking up engineering apprenticeships. Recommendations are also made for investment in bursaries and funding to enable development of the teaching workforce.

But most important of all, as outlined by Gavin Moodie in his article for the Conversation on 22 July, is that the conservative government in the UK is questioning the effectiveness of many aspects of a market-driven technical education system. The original report comments on the high costs associated with 'world-class' technical education, and states that the committee drafting the report sees a **'strong case for public funding for education and training to be restricted to institutions where surpluses are reinvested into the country's education infrastructure'**.

The Government's report in response makes the following comments and recommendations:

*Good technical education requires expert teachers and lecturers. It also requires industry-standard facilities which are costly to develop and maintain. A rationalisation of specialist technical education facilities is required, concentrating them in a smaller number of high-quality, financially-stable institutions which are easily recognisable to both employers and prospective students. We recommend that, when national and local decisions about the provision and funding of technical education are being taken, consideration is given to restricting funding to colleges and training providers which meet clear criteria of quality, stability and an ability to maintain up-to-date equipment and infrastructure.*

Australia has been known to adopt overseas (particularly from the UK or US) educational programs and policies whether they are applicable to the Australian conditions or not. In this case our Government should be listening. Marketisation of vocational education and training has not worked in the UK, and it is not working in Australia. It is time to have a different conversation and learn some useful lessons from the UK.

## Congratulations!!

### CEO of Innovation Science Australia

Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, Greg Hunt has recently announced the appointment of Dr Charles Day to lead Innovation Science Australia (ISA). He said 'I am delighted to announce the appointment of University of Melbourne innovation expert Dr Charles Day as CEO of Innovation and Science Australia (ISA) [which] ... provides strategic, whole-of-government advice on all science, research and innovation matters. This includes guidance on the Government's \$10.1 billion investment in 2016-17 in innovation, science and research including measures through the National Innovation and Science Agenda.'



### Chair of PISA governing board

Dr Michelle Bruniges AM, Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, has been appointed to the position of Chair of the Governing Board of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). PISA assesses the performance of education systems worldwide, by measuring and comparing the scientific, reading and mathematical literacy of their students.

## Stories making the news

### **ASQA cancels 2700 security qualifications**

The Australian Skills Quality Authority cancelled 1947 training certificates awarded by the Queensland-based Peacemakers Security, and another 756 qualifications issued by Austwide Institute of Training: Source: The Australian - <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/asqa-cancels-2700-security-quals/news-story/a638fd78976e8168d151536555fd0f5f>

### **New Minister Appointed To Cabinet**

Gayle Tierney, a former state secretary of the Vehicle Division of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union has been appointed to the Victorian Cabinet as Minister for Training and Skills, and Minister for Corrections. She is the Member for Western Victoria Region. Source: Premier of Victoria - <http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/new-minister-appointed-to-cabinet-2/>

### **SSOs for Manufacturing, Automotive and Drilling industries**

Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) has been asked to form the sixth SSO servicing the VET sector. It will be responsible for the supporting the manufacturing sector. Existing Price Waterhouse Coopers Skills for Australia has been asked to extend its coverage to include automotive and mining and drilling sectors. Source: Department of Education and Training - <https://ministers.education.gov.au/andrews/putting-industry-centre-training>

### **Academic underachievers also find jobs after school**

Research conducted at the University of Melbourne reveals that the chances of finding a job by age 25 are not reduced by low reading proficiency levels while at school. Source: University of Melbourne - <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/academic-underachievers-make-good-after-school>

### **Tracking university completions**

Indigenous students are among those groups most at risk of not completing their university studies. The Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) is tracking students from the time they begin their studies to the time they complete them. It notes university students from disadvantaged groups have a lower completion rate than the national average. This research is aimed at coming up with better support strategies for these students. Source: ACER - <https://rd.acer.edu.au/article/tracking-university-completions>

### **Apprenticeship funding in the United Kingdom (UK)**

The UK government has released details on how the *apprenticeship levy system* will be used to fund apprenticeships. Justine Greening's [written statement](#), promises that all people, regardless of background or family circumstances, should have the opportunity to take up apprenticeships. Source: TES - <https://www.tes.com/news/further-education/breaking-news/apprenticeship-funding-updates-key-details>

### **Coalition says the cost 'gap' between private vocational trainers and TAFES is 'staggering'**

The education minister, Simon Birmingham, has released figures to indicate a 'staggering' gap between the course fees of private and public providers. Source: The Guardian - <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/oct/24/coalition-says-cost-gap-between-private-vocational-trainers-and-tafes-staggering>

## **Dramatic growth in International Education**

Education Minister Simon Birmingham has reported to the Australian International Education Conference that in 2015 the standing record of about 640,000 foreign enrolments had been surpassed in the first eight months of 2016. Senator Birmingham said that while the growth was an 'incredibly positive sign' the sector could not afford to 'rest on its laurels'.

Source: The Australia - <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/international-ed-trumps-itself/news-story/3950c2a4db29fc61c6c452c774e630a9>

## **75% pass rates for providers to access VET student loans program**

The education minister, Simon Birmingham, has revealed new rules for providers who want to participate in the VET student loans program. Colleges with a less than 75% pass rate may have their enrolments under the scheme restricted; those with higher pass rates may be able to enrol more students.

Source: The Guardian - <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/nov/17/coalition-crackdown-on-private-education-to-penalise-colleges-with-less-than-75-pass-rates>

## **UK's worsening social mobility problem**

The Social Mobility Commission State of the Nation Report "[state of the nation](#)" report says that Britain's young people born after the 1980s make up the 'first post-war cohort' not to earn more income than their parents or cohorts of young people that preceded them. The Commission says that this has been due to some 'fundamental barriers [including] an unfair education system, a 2-tier labour market, a regionally imbalanced economy and an unaffordable housing market'. Source:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/state-of-the-nation-report-on-social-mobility-in-great-britain>

## **SEEK Learning winds up; new business to take its place**

Regulatory changes for the vocational education and training sector will mean that SEEK will close its education arm; a new business will take over in 2017. SEEK Learning has also operated as a broker and the new regulations about the funding of brokers in the sector will affect its ability to continue. Source: Learning and Development Professional -

<http://www.ldphub.com/general-news/seek-learning-folds-replacement-on-the-way-227651.aspx>

## **Slowing student growth in higher education**

Growth in applications for higher education fell to 1.7 per cent this year, down from 3.2 per cent in 2015. Universities made just 0.8 per cent more offers, reflecting increasingly selective university admission processes.

Source: The Australian - <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/student-growth-nearing-balance/news-story/618584acfd97e66a361341bcd0df2004>

The considerable resources of the VOCEDplus data base can help you when you are starting up a new research projects or literature reviews. VOCEDplus is funded by the Australian Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and is endorsed by the UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre in Bonn, Germany. It is produced by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), based in Adelaide, Australia.



VOCEDplus

Click on the following link to start your search.

<http://www.voced.edu.au/>

## Scholarships and awards

Dear AVETRA Members,

Nominations are called for the following AVETRA Awards to be presented at the 2017 AVETRA Conference from the 18-20 April 2017.

We are seeking nominations for AVETRA members who have provided distinguished service to VET Research. Please consider colleagues that you believe are worthy to nominate for this award. Details of the previous recipients are on the AVETRA website (<http://avetra.org.au/awards-scholarships>).

1. [Berwyn Clayton Award for Distinguished Service to the education and development of VET educators and other professionals](#)

Nominations **close COB Friday 3 March 2017.**

2. AVETRA 2016 Journal of the Year Award

- [Cover](#)
- [Criteria](#)

Nominations **close COB Friday 3 March 2017.**

3. [AVETRA Ambassador Award](#)

Nominations **close COB Friday 3 March 2017.**

The Conference 'Paper of the Year' and the 'Early Career Researcher Award Paper of the Year' will be determined by the Conference sub-committee. You should indicate on your Abstract for the Conference whether you are an early career researcher.



## Latest selected NCVER facts and figures about VET participation and outcomes



The Total VET Activity (TVA) report aims to provide a comprehensive account of the nationally recognized training provided in the private sector as well as in publicly funded VET (including all training by TAFEs, and government-supported delivery by private and community colleges and enterprise training providers). Here is a short video introducing you to the product.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnOFiuvQaTs&feature=youtu.be>

The following information has been reproduced from NCVER's infographic on participation and outcomes using TVA data <https://www.ncver.edu.au/data/data/infographics/total-vet-students-and-courses-2015-infographic>

In 2015 there were 26.8% of Australians aged 15 to 64 years who participated in VET (23.3% in 2014). There were 4277 training providers, around 4.5 million students, 4.5 million program enrolments, 29.4 million subject enrolments, and 820.2 million hours of VET delivered.

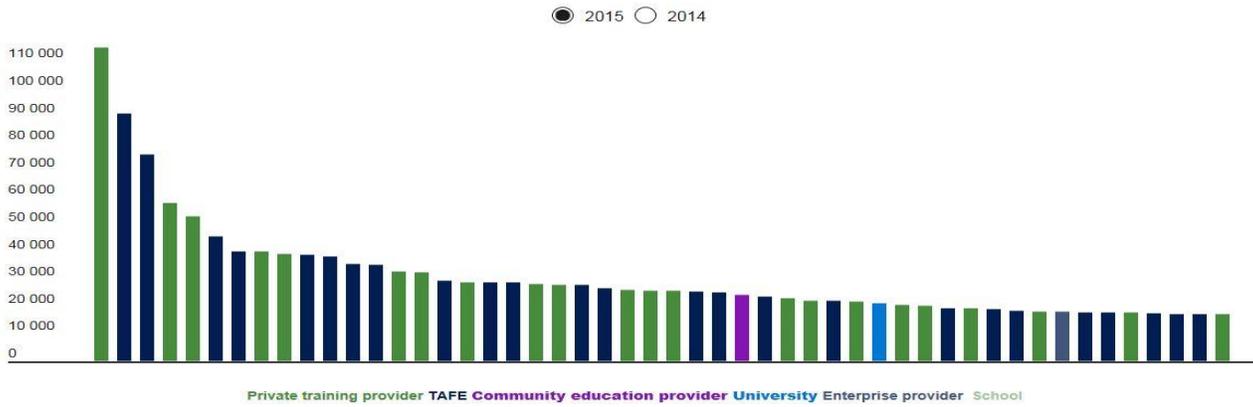
### Number of providers delivering training



### Number of students by provider type



## 50 largest providers by type and student numbers



## Level of qualifications completed in 2015



For more information visit <https://www.ncver.edu.au/data/data/total-vet-activity>



## **Another successful OctoberVET season!**

The 2016 OctoberVET this year saw 10 events taking place in metropolitan and regional venues across Australia and New Zealand. It was well attended with some events attracting more than one hundred participants. The events brought together people from a variety of backgrounds which included industry stakeholders, research students, early career researchers, academics, and VET practitioners.

Each event had a variety of themes some of which included VET trades and apprenticeships, VET research and the future, Teaching, training and learning, secondary pathways, the VET provider market, and applied research.

It was gratifying to note the strong interest among those who attended the events. This was seen in the discussions that took place after each of the speaker's presentations.

This year's events have shown that the VET sector is engaging in research for the future with reference to the topics that have been presented.

A special commendation must be given to the convenors of the events who have given up so much of their time and effort in coordinating the events in their local area that made it possible. These people included Erica Smith (Vic), Karen O'reilly –Briggs (Vic), Arnaldo Barone (Vic), Jessica Gerrard (Vic), Landis Barrett-Pugh (WA), Vicki Ulkamann (Qld), Dawn Firth (SA), Josie Misko (SA), Linda Simon (NSW), and Stuart Middleton (NZ).

It is now time to start focusing on OctoberVET 2017 and the invitation is extended to people to come and be part of it. There will be a call for convenors broadcast at the 2017 AVETRA conference. We look forward to your participation at the OctoberVET in 2017.

Steve Hodge and Joe Pagnoccolo, Executive Committee – OctoberVET coordinators

## 2017 Conferences



Registration opens soon. [Download the program now!](#)

## AERA Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Texas

**27 April to May 1**, American Educational Research Association, *Knowledge to Action: Achieving the promise of Equal Opportunity*, San Antonio, Texas, USA. See more at <http://www.aera.net/Events-Meetings>





<https://www.ncver.edu.au/about/news-and-events/events/26th-national-vocational-education-and-training-research-conference>

## World TVET 2017, New Zealand



**13-14 September**, World TVET 2017, Queenstown New Zealand, *'Building Successful Skills and Life Outcomes'* See more at <http://www.worldtvvet2017.kiwi/>; <http://www.worldtvvet2017.kiwi/tvet-conference-september-2017/who-is-this-conference-for>; <http://www.worldtvvet2017.kiwi/PicsHotel/IVETA/Brochure/TVET2017-Why-You-Should-Attend.pdf>; <http://www.worldtvvet2017.kiwi/PicsHotel/IVETA/Brochure/TVET%20Prospectus%20Delegates%20FINAL.pdf>



**March 1-3**, *Universities Australia, Higher Education Conference 2017 'Higher Education: Gen Next*, National Convention Centre Canberra. Early bird rate register before 3 Feb 2017 See more at <https://www.eiseverywhere.com//ehome/200505>

**May 25-26**, Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) Conference, *Excellence in Professional Practice*, Gold Coast. See more at <https://www.acer.edu.au/eppc>

**May 12-19**, Career Development Association of Australia, *Inspiring Excellence in Career Development, Responding locally to global challenges*, Pullman Brisbane, King George

Square, See more at <http://cdaconference.com.au/>

**June 8-9**, *EduTECH, Educational Congress and Expo*, International Convention Centre, Sydney, Choose from 8 parallel conferences. See more at <http://www.edutech.net.au/>

**July 5-7**, National Vocational Education and Training Research 26<sup>th</sup> National VET Research Conference 'No Frills' Conference, *Skilling for Tomorrow*, TasTAFE, Hobart <https://www.ncver.edu.au/about/news-and-events/events/26th-national-vocational-education-and-training-research-conference>

**July 19-21**, ACE 2017, (*Australian Conference of Economists*), *Education for Better Lives*, Sofitel Hotel, Sydney, See more at <http://esacentral.org.au/content/407/annual-conference>

**August 24 – 25**, The ACPET National Conference will be held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre in Brisbane See more at: <http://acpet2017.com.au>

**September 14-15**, Velg National Conference, Sydney 2017, *Building Quality in VET*, International Convention Centre, Sydney. See more at <https://www.velgtraining.com/national-conference>

**October 18-21**, Australian International Education Conference, *Connectivity at the heart of international education*, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Melbourne, VIC. See more at <https://www.ieaa.org.au/what-we-do/australian-international-education-conference>

## International conferences for 2017: dates and links



**15-18 February**, International Society for Comparative Adult Education, 'Comparative Studies in Adult and Lifelong Learning, University of Wurzburg, Germany 'Comparative Studies in Adult and Lifelong Learning' (COMPALL) ; See more at <http://www.iscae.org/conferences/2017conf/17-confmain.htm>; <http://www.lifelonglearning.uni-wuerzburg.de/startseite/>

**March 20- 23**, APAIE - Asia - Pacific Association for International Education 2017, Kaohsiung Exhibition Centre, Taiwan. See more at <https://www.apaie.org/conference/2017/intro/>

**8-10 March**, Open Education Global 2017 Conference, Open for Participation, Cape Town South Africa. See more at <http://www.oeconsortium.org/2016/06/call-for-proposals-open-education-global-conference-2017/>

**27 April to May 1**, American Educational Research Association, *Knowledge to Action: Achieving the promise of Equal Opportunity*, San Antonio, Texas, USA , See more at <http://www.aera.net/Events-Meetings>

**7-9 June**, 18th, International Conference on human resource development, research and practice across Europe, University Forum for Human Resource Development, *Indigenous HRD in a context of globalisation*, Universidade Europeia, Lisbon, Portugal. See more at <http://www.ufhrd.co.uk/wordpress/18th-international-conference-on-human-resource-development-research-and-practice-across-europe/>. Early bird registration 1 April 2017 April 8-12

**26-29 June**, Canada International Conference on Education, *Global issues in education and research*, University of Toronto, Mississauga, Canada. See more at <http://www.ciceducation.org/>

**19-21 July**, 2017 *Special Focus: New Media for new learning*, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, USA, See more at <http://thelearner.com/2017-conference>

**4-6 July**, SCUTREA, '*Adult Education for Inclusion and Diversity*', University of Edinburgh, Pollock Halls campus, See more at <http://www.scutrea.ac.uk/> call for papers 15 January 2017, mail to [creid-education@ed.ac.uk](mailto:creid-education@ed.ac.uk)

**21-22 August**, European Education Research Association (EERA), ECER 2017, Annual Emerging Researchers' Conference, See more at: <http://www.eera-ecer.de/ecer-2017-copenhagen/>

**22 - 25 August**, European Education Research Association (EERA), ECER 2017, *Reforming Education and the imperative of constant change: Ambivalent roles of policy and educational research*, the University College Copenhagen, Denmark See more at: <http://www.eera-ecer.de/ecer-2017-copenhagen/>

**16-18 August**, International VET Conference 2017, *Crossing Boundaries in Vocational Education and Training: Social Dimensions and Participation*, University of Rostock, Germany. See more at <http://www.ibp.uni-rostock.de/vet2017/>

**Check out this website for easy access to information on conferences in different countries**

<https://www.worldconferencealerts.com/Russian-Federation.php>

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**We wish you a very  
Happy Xmas and  
Holiday Season and a  
prosperous 2017.**

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## About AVETRA

AVETRA is the peak professional association for VET researchers. Its ability to be a sustainable and viable association depends on its membership. Members are urged to continue their membership and to encourage their colleagues to join AVETRA.

AVETRA services include:

- An annual VET international research conference
- Two editions of *International Journal of Training Research per annum*
- The AVETRA e-newsletter with the latest news in the VET sector as well as VET research twice a year.
- The new *Research Today* publication twice a year.
- OctoberVET workshops organised by AVETRA members in centres as widely spread as Perth, Darwin, Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.
- The AVETRA website with VET research links and information
- Awards for VET researchers including the joint award with TAFE Directors Australia, the Berwyn Clayton Award, The Ray Barker Award, and the AVETRA Best paper Award.

HELP AVETRA help VET research and join now if you are not a member. Full **\$180** (GST inclusive) and Student memberships **\$90.00** including GST are available.

*If you are interested in providing leads or contributing to this newsletter, please contact Josie Misko -*  
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