

Kangan Re-imagined: Towards a learner centred VET system

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In this paper I want to....

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WHY A NEW SOCIAL SETTLEMENT IN VET?

A national conversation is occurring about the role and purpose of vet VET in the post secondary education eco-system

THE PURPOSE OF VET: NOW AND THEN

From expansive...

"The [Kangan] report envisages a major shift of emphasis. It abandons the narrow and rigid concept that technical colleges exist simply to meet the manpower needs of industry, and adopts a broader concept that they exist to meet the needs of people as individuals".

(Education Minister Kim Beazley Sr., tabling the report of the Kangan Committee to Parliament, 1973)

...to narrow:

"...a high quality vocational education and training system that contributes to Australia's economic productivity and growth...

...improved employment outcomes by supporting Australians to obtain the skills and training they need for jobs in demand..."

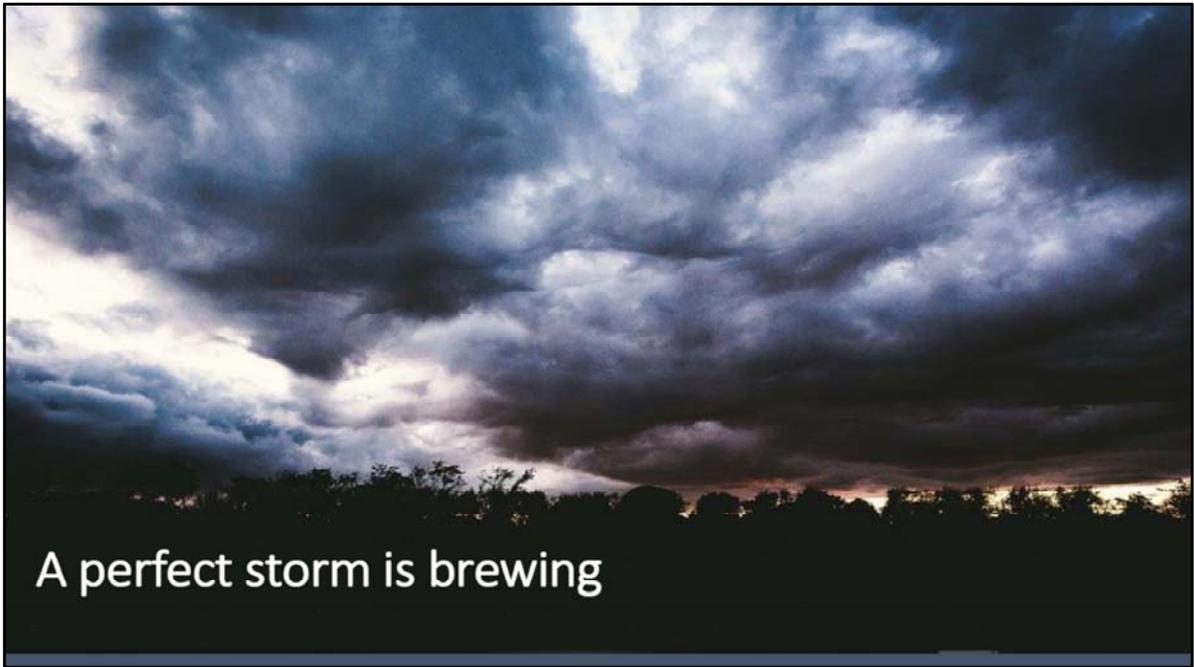
(National Partnership on the Skilling Australians Fund, COAG, 2017)

When VET was formed in the 1970s, the Kangan Committee outlined an expansive vision for TAFES as public institutions – one that emphasised social inclusion, lifelong learning, alongside industry responsiveness.

However, this expansive remit has narrowed since the 1980s – driven by concerns about economic growth and productivity, liberalisation of financial markets and an emphasis on the VET market and competition between providers as a means of driving efficiency, effectiveness and diversity in the sector.

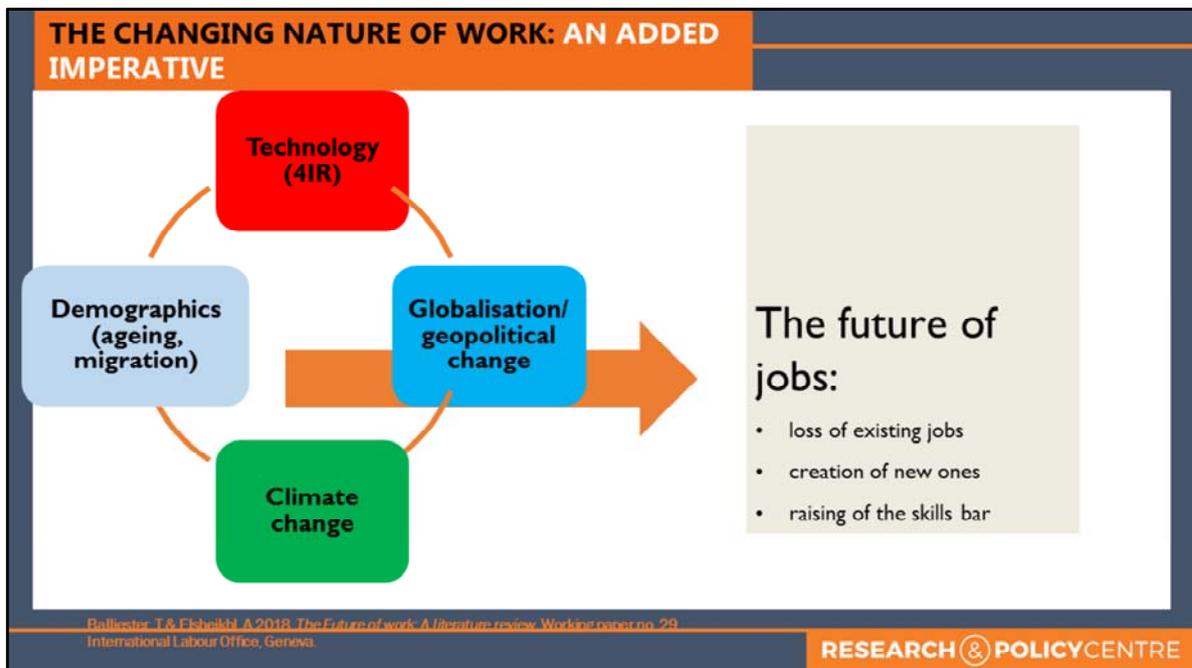
This narrow remit for VET stands today, reflected in the

- policy discourse which positions VET as the 'engine room for industry', and
- diminished funding for social support and community service obligations through marketisation;
- loss of bodies such as the National VET Equity Advisory Council (NVEAC) and ANTA before that which drive and understand the issues that impact effectiveness for key learner groups;
- and the limitation on data around equity groups.



A perfect storm is brewing

It comes in the midst of a brewing storm



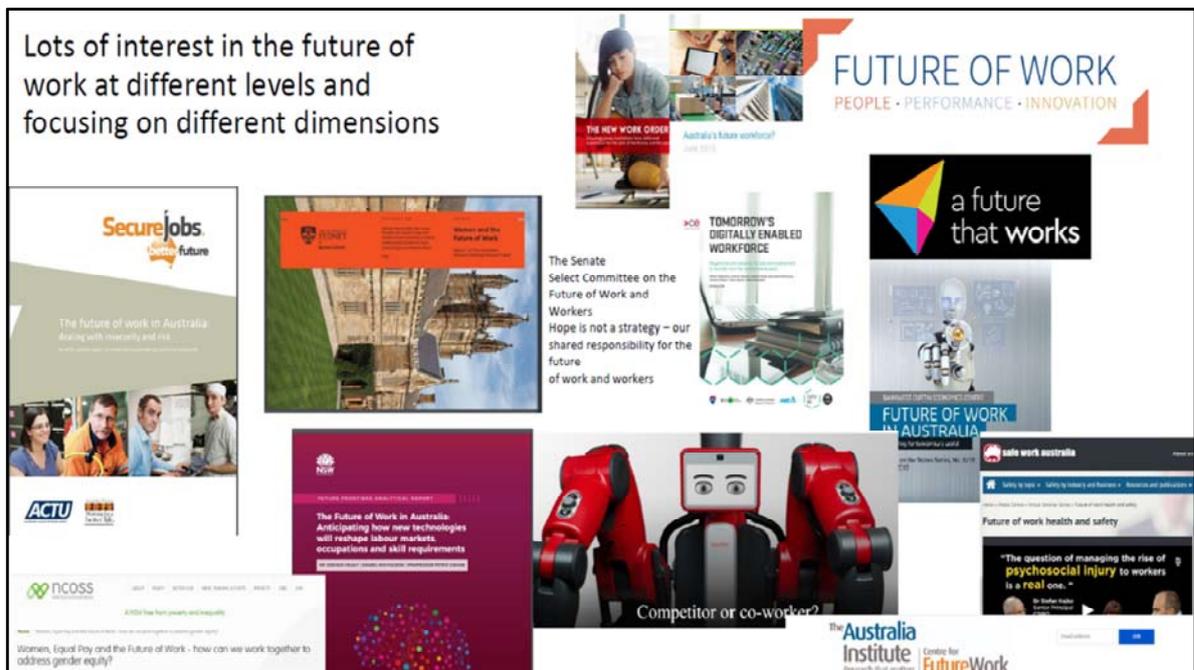
AS the ILO notes, We are experiencing the early stages of a fourth industrial revolution driven by a confluence of factors Technology, geopolitical changes, demographics and climate change. In this context work is changing

Many are trying to predict the future



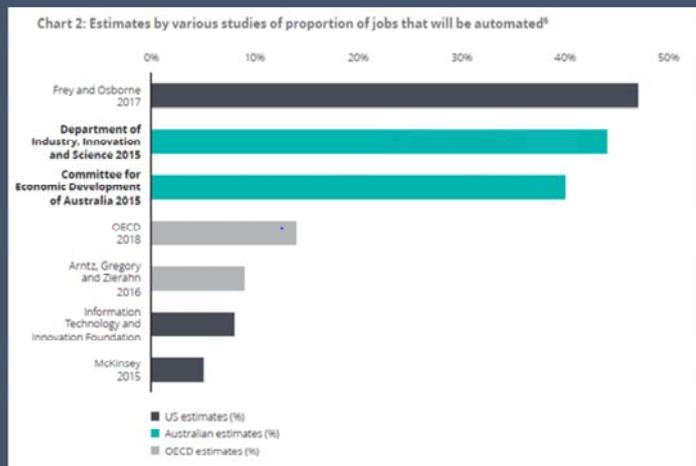
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Many are scrambling to predict the future - industries, governments, employers, educators, academics ordinary citizens – the future of work and the education system to meet this challenge



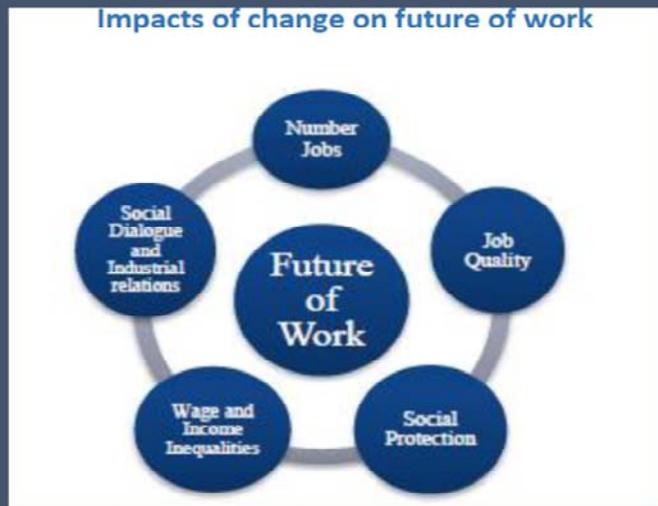
This has sparked a plethora of reports on the future of work, each predicting varying degrees of disruption to work but with broad agreement that in Australia, at least, we will increasingly see, as the most recent, a 2019 report by Deloitte, **The Path to Prosperity: Why the Future of Work is Human?** Notes— jobs that engage our hearts or head jobs rather than hands

The impact of Automation



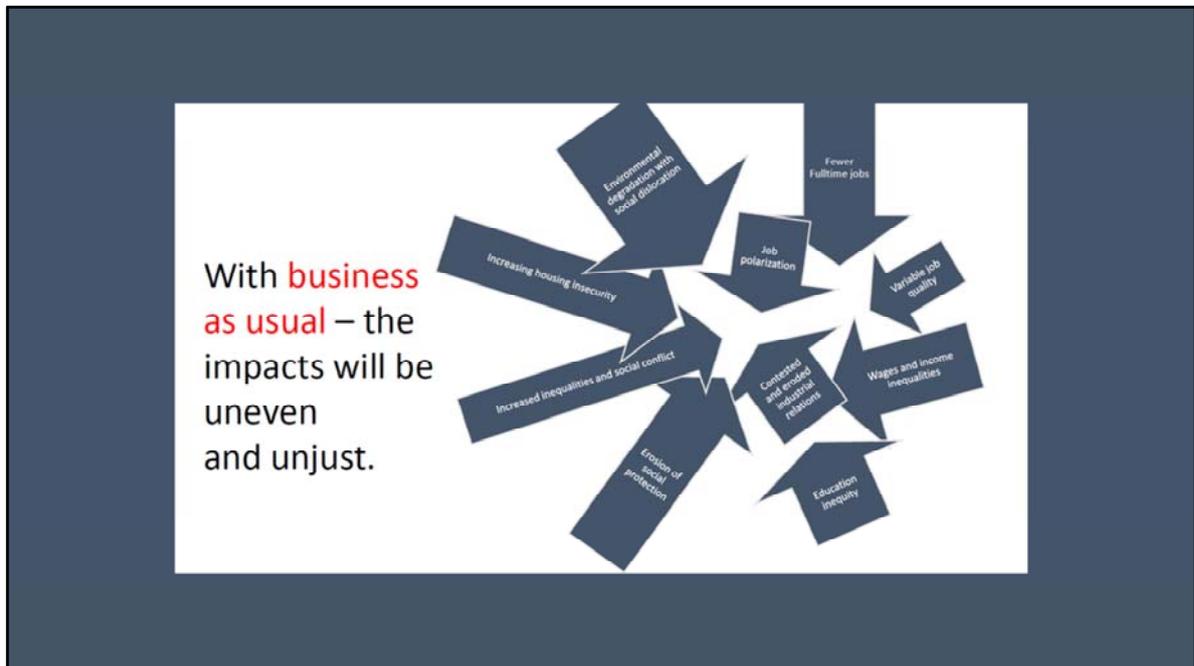
However as the Deloitte report also highlights predictions about the impact of technology on the nature of jobs vary wildly

Impact of change on work futures



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AS The ILO 2018 review of literature on the future of work reveals however however the future of work actually unfolds five key dimensions will be important to consider when considering the impacts of current and likely trends.



However All are agreed that with business as usual the impacts will be uneven and unjust as we see

- **An accelerated wave of technology driven transformation across the economy**
- **greater** , personalised customer engagement, agile network based organisational structures, and co-production
- **Accelerated job displacement**
- **A predicted change in workforce composition** toward greater diversity, a ‘four generation’ workforce, increased female participation, lower male participation, increased retirement ages and a decline in overall labour market participation due to population ageing
- **Increased job flexibility and freelancing, but potentially more insecurity and contract based work**, driven by the rise of sharing economy

These changes will result in **shifting capabilities and skills requirements**, including the need for greater creativity, relationships, personal interaction and digital literacy, problem solving.

The International Labour Organization has identified the following skill sets as important:

- **Basic/foundational skills:** i.e. the minimum literacy and numeracy skills that enable an employee to continue to learn and to acquire transferable skills,
- **Vocational or technical skills:** i.e. specialised skills aligned to a specific vocation or task,
- **Professional/personal skills:** i.e. individual attributes that impact on work habits, including honesty, work ethic and integrity.

- **Core work skills**, is a fourth set increasingly in demand, and particularly for young jobseekers. These include:
 - *'Learning to learn'* refers to an inquisitive outlook that enables the acquisition of knowledge, skills, aptitudes, and attitudes. This open disposition manifests in the ability to think abstractly, analyse information, work independently and better plan, manage and adapt.
 - *'Communication'* refers to the capacity through personal interaction and a host of media to share, listen, observe, exchange, articulate and influence. This, ultimately, is a measure of how an individual is able to maintain an understanding of their changing surrounds.
 - *'Teamwork'* skills are those that result in respectful, mutually beneficial and fruitful collaboration where goals, responsibilities, resource and time allocation are negotiable.
 - *'Problem solving'* refers to the capacity to calmly assess and evaluate information or situations, to consider consequences and the range of options, before devising, planning and implementing responses.

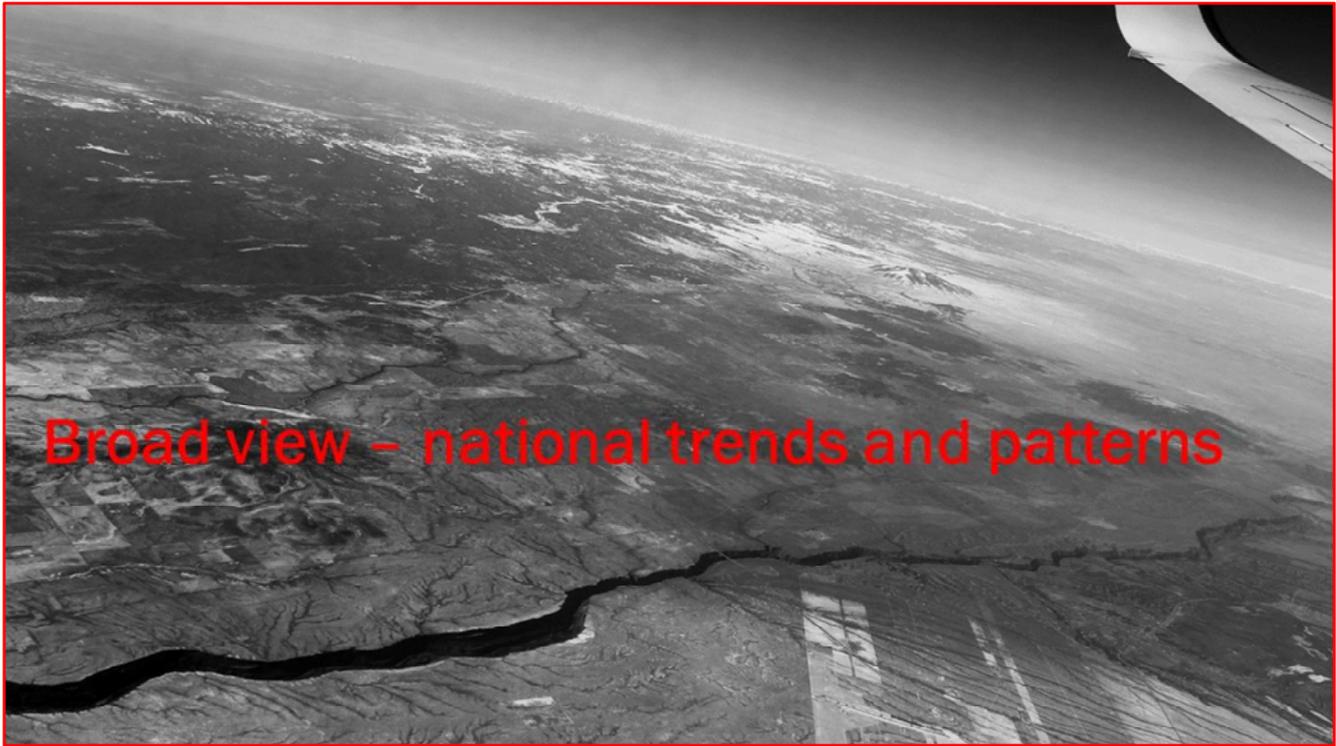
They will likely result in a stratification of job opportunities **favouring higher skilled occupations, and slower growth in low to medium skilled occupations.**

Over the next 15 years there will be a sharp increase in skilled employment in health and personal care and professional occupations

Jobs in the health and social assistance industry are forecast to almost triple.

Clearly in the midst of significant change debate about the role and purpose of VET that has surfaced in over nine reviews across the past decade, has become more heightened and important. It is now critical that we develop a new social settlement for VET one in which we design curricula and pedagogies as well as personal support, vocational guidance and pathway planning and community infrastructure that equip people to maintain decent work, economic security and well-being across the life course while also meeting the needs of industry and employers.

How are we placed in Australia to address these issues? Is our VET system capable of the task?



Before we consider what this should look like How are we placed in Australia to address these issues? And most importantly in the context of this how well placed is our VET system to take on this task?



Many recognise that VET has a crucial role to play in equipping people – and the nation – with the skills they need to meet and thrive in these changes and challenges,

Skills development and capacity to gain employment + personal dev and social inclusion

Benefits to students of vocational education accrue not only in the form of skills developed and an enhanced capacity to gain suitable and rewarding employment, but also in greater personal development and social inclusion.

Greater quals correlates with reduced social exclusions

Research shows a correlation between higher level qualifications and a reduction of social exclusion (Buddelmeyer et al 2012).

Community benefits

It follows that the community as a whole benefits from high participation in vocational training and an effective VET system, with research also highlighting the non-financial benefits of all education (improved health, greater social equity, less crime etc). While this may be self evident, mention of the value of vocational training to society in general rarely appears in sector specific policy and documentation.

Industry and ‘the economy’ also benefit through access to skilled and readily available labour, improved workplace culture, productivity and, for government, higher taxation revenues (Griffin 2016).

One major study calculates the financial benefits to Australia of closing the gap between 'equity groups' (i.e. early school leavers and those with poor educational attainments, indigenous learners, those with disabilities, and those of low SES backgrounds). **One calculation made—on changes to the gap between those of low SES and the general population, via VET—estimated a gain to the economy of \$3.91 bill by 2020** (Deloitte 2011).

However, it remains that VET produces mixed results... mixed results for industry, mixed results for employers, mixed results for students, and especially for disadvantaged students who are highly represented in the sector

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY IN VET: MIXED OUTCOMES

- High student and employer satisfaction (NCVER 2018)
- Most VET graduates get employment related benefit (NCVER 2018)
- High portability of quals (Hodge 2018)
- Caters to large and diverse population (4.2 million students)

But also...



- Participation rates are falling for key equity groups
- Low attainment rates (40-60%) (NCVER 2016)
- Issues of quality in training
- Mismatch between skills/demand in some industries (Wheelahlan et al. 2015)
- Complexity and fragmentation in VET market (Bowman & McKenna 2016)
- Poor articulation between Secondary/VET/higher education systems
- A parity problem underlined by funding mismatch (Pilcher & Torii 2017)
- Unresolved division of labour Commonwealth/States (Bowman & McKenna 2016)

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At one level, it does quite well.

Total sector participation (NCVER 2017)

- 4.2 million students, a 0.7% increase from 2016
- a participation rate as a proportion of the Australian population (15-64 yos) remaining steady at 24.1%, with participation highest among 15-19 yos (46.1%)

Outcomes and satisfaction: as gauged from the NCVER's surveying of students and employers

Students

The most recent student outcomes survey (of over 200,000 students) shows that

- satisfaction with the quality of training is high (86% graduates) (NCVER 2018).
- 85.4% of graduates were employed or continuing study, down 0.7% from 2017.

Employers

The survey revealed that:

- 75.4% of employers were satisfied that VET qualifications provide employees with the required skills.
- 77.5% were satisfied their apprentices/trainees obtained the required skills (down 4.2% on 2015)
- 82.2% were satisfied that nationally recognised training (not part of an apprenticeship or traineeship) provided employees with the required skills (similar to 2015).

The OECD's view of Australia's VET system is also quite sanguine

Notwithstanding some challenges, it has many strengths when compared to other

OECD countries:

- Australia has a very well developed VET system, which enjoys a high degree of confidence.
- The engagement of employers is strong.
- The national qualification system is well established and understood.
- The VET system is flexible and allows for a fair amount of local autonomy and innovation.

Participation rates are troubling (2016-17)

- 15-19 yo (mostly early school leavers) (- 0)
- Inner regional (- .6)
- Outer regional (- 2.6)
- Remote (- 4.7)
- Very Remote (- 5.6)
- Indigenous (- 15.6)
- Those with a disability (- .3)
- SEIFA Quintile 1 (most disadvantaged) (- 2.1)

Overall there's been a 20% fall in participation across the board between 2012-16, no doubt due in part to the funding cuts across the states and by the Commonwealth.

Completion rates:

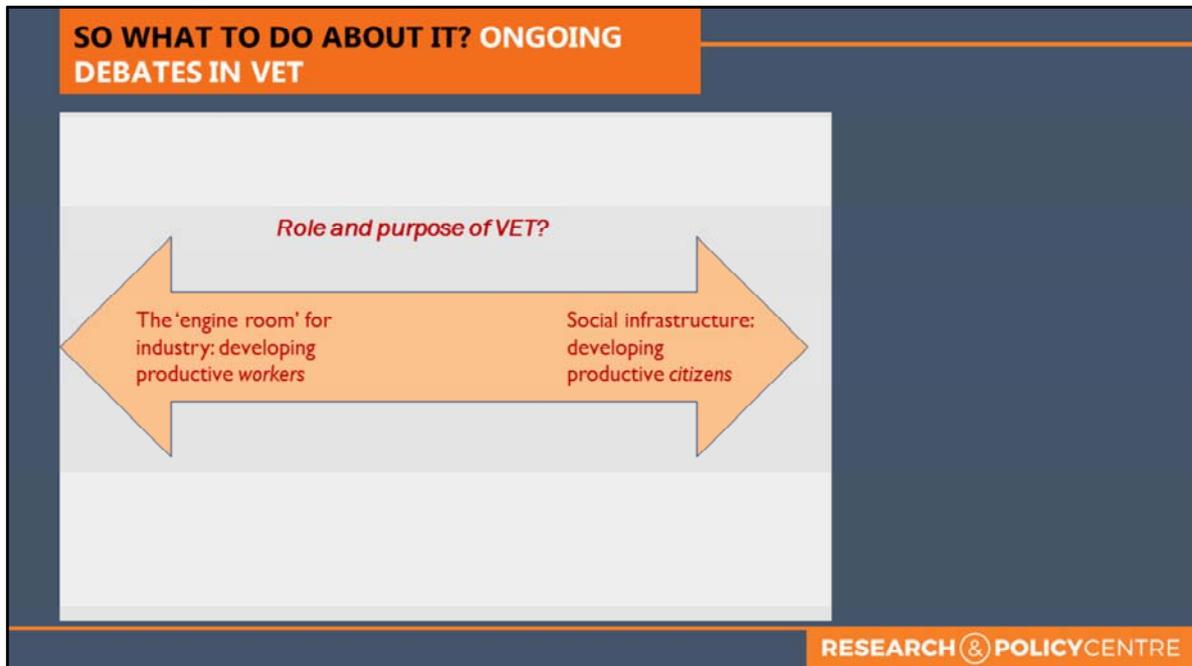
and finally, there's the quite alarming completion rates: Total sector completion rates (NCVER 2016, projected and commencing in 2016)

- 47% for all VET programs
- 48% for programs delivered by private training providers, 47% for community education providers and 43% for TAFE
- 50% for Commonwealth and state funded programs, 39% for fee-for-service programs undertaken by domestic students

We should note too, that the data now available doesn't serve any strategic purpose in efforts to improve 'equity group' or 'disadvantaged learner' outcomes.

As an aside, this is what we've lost since the dissolution of the National Equity Advisory Council (NVEAC)

Before its dissolution in 2014, NVEAC developed a VET Equity Outcomes Framework, and published data on participation, achievement, and transition data on a broad range of 'equity groups'. These included indigenous Australians, people with a disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people living in remote areas, people from low SES backgrounds, 'second chance learners', and women (NVEAC, 2013).



Clearly then there is a pressing need for reform in VET - to address **both** individual **and** national social economic development

However, the directions for this reform remain contested. Broadly speaking, they can be viewed as points on a continuum – where various stakeholders sit on this continuum - employers, students, industry bodies policy makers, teachers, etc. - is determined by their understanding of the role and purpose of VET.

At both ends people are driven by real and reasonable concerns about economic productivity, social inclusion, individual economic security etc.

And as Buchanan in this equation we have case an either or between

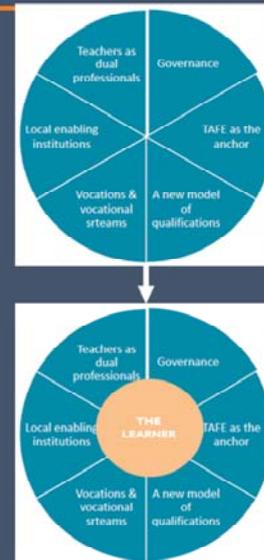
- (a) Anchor institutions that define and deliver quality
- OR
- (a) 'Public providers' in a world of 'competitive neutrality' and increased 'user choice' of education and education providers

ONE END OF THE CONTINUUM: PRODUCTIVE CAPABILITIES AND TAFE AS ANCHOR

Prominent writers in the space (Wheelahan et al. 2015, Buchanan et al. 2018) call for reform in two areas:

- Reform of qualifications and curriculum – from Competency Based Training to productive capabilities and 'vocational streams'.
- Elevated role for TAFEs in the diverse provider landscape – 'anchors' in place for social and economic development, as well as anchors in the sector for innovation and excellence in training.

However still missing a critical piece of the puzzle – the learner...

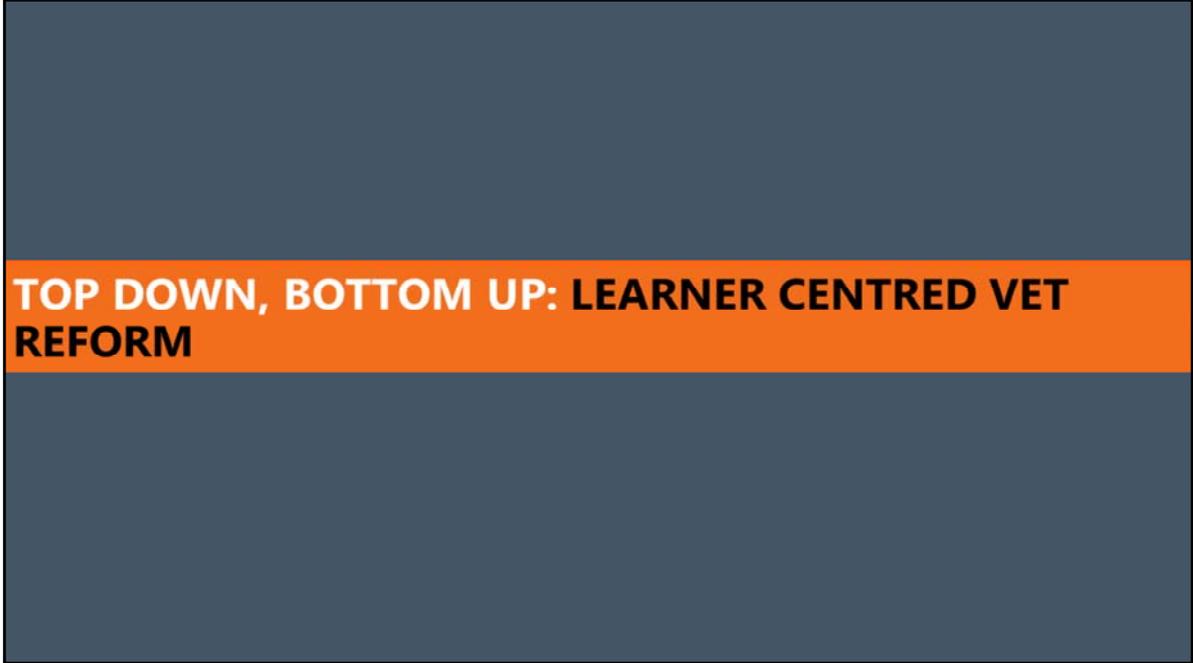


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At one end of the continuum, Wheelahan offers a solution – productive capabilities, vocational streams and TAFE as anchor, anchoring social and economic development in communities. We see particular potential in use of capabilities and the TAFE as anchor concept ... this is hardly surprising for the Brotherhood as we have been working with the application of the Capabilities approach to diverse human service sectors for the past decade or so

However, we identify some gaps- and therefore opportunities for refinement - in the model proposed by Leesa and colleagues – we believe it minimises the student or learner perspective and has not yet stepped out how to achieve TAFE as anchor – in short, it provides a top down and systems centred view of reform.

What do I mean by this? I'll explain...



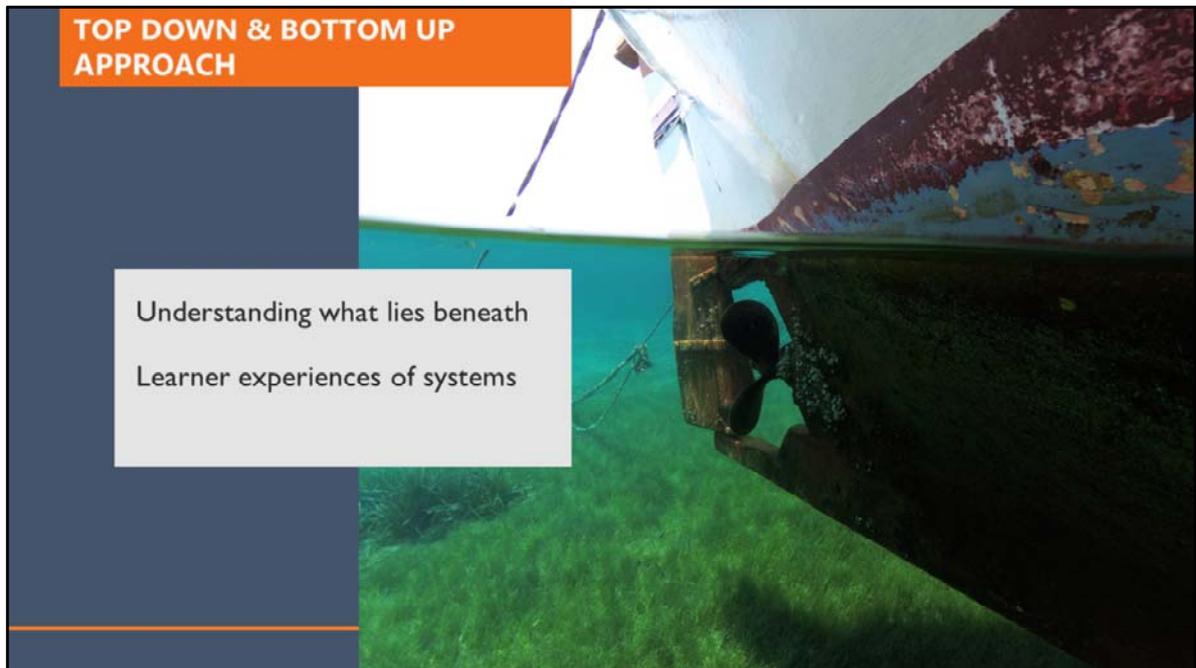
TOP DOWN, BOTTOM UP: LEARNER CENTRED VET REFORM

What does this mean and why is this important



Top down reform looks at reconfiguring structures: eg role and purpose of TAFE and VET

BUT TOP DOWN approach only gives you a partial picture. We're missing what goes on beneath the surface ie the lived experience of working with and through these systems - industry, employers and educators – but most critically, the student, who has been peripheral to this debate so far.



Critically, this means we need to hear from students themselves – to understand what’s happening for them as they try to access, engage and attain in VET.

In other words, change from above must go hand in hand with an understanding of what’s happening below

At the BSL, our research elevates these hidden experiences – and particularly in relation to YP

YP are adept at pointing out how the current system doesn’t work for them

For many years, the BSL in its research and service provision has consulted with numerous learners and practitioners across the country, as well as leading researchers and those in peak bodies concerned with how VET is serving the country.

We’ve learnt that success for a learner is predicated on variables at play within and beyond a given educational institution.

NAVIGATING VET: WHAT ARE YOUNG PEOPLE TELLING US?

Limited provision of vocational guidance and navigational support in a complex and opaque system.

"[with VET] you weren't offered. You had to go and speak to [them] first... But you'd always have to go back to find out. It was always us having to do the work". (Young male, Qld, 2017)

"I would probably be a fully qualified chef by now if someone had come in from TAFE and said, "This is the hospitality course we're offering, this is how much it is, come in and do it". (young male)



"... with the application and stuff... there was a lot of big words that I didn't even know about until I looked at that form [...]"

"If you don't have a good support background... you might fill it out incorrectly and send it in they'll look at you like, "oh"". (young female)

WE identify the prospective learners' bewilderment at the range of providers and qualifications, inadequate wellbeing and learning supports, user-unfriendly timetabling, training providers and support agencies that are at odds, intimidating learning settings, remote locales, limited choice, and alienating enrolment processes.

For example young people tell is VET is a highly complex, bureaucratic and opaque system – there's limited navigational support aside from marketing.

Limited or inconsistent access to vocational guidance – particularly for those without family support.

Many Young people disengage prior to or shortly after enrolment.

Many Young people make wrong decisions, burn entitlements, achieve poor employment outcomes.

LEARNING IN VET: WHAT ARE YOUNG PEOPLE TELLING US?

Inflexibility in teaching approach (despite wealth of expertise and commitment in workforce) + artificial separation of 'vocational' and 'non-vocational' needs.

"I actually did the whole test you do in TAFE and I got in, but then I was too scared to actually go ... because of my anxiety. [So] I haven't actually been to TAFE." (Young female, student, outer metro, Vic)

"Because it's worded differently, they're using bigger words, and it's like I don't know what that word is, and I have to keep going back to the dictionary... It's taking me extra time to do it, because I'm so confused..." (Young female student, Vic, 2011)

"They often go 'No, I'm not going to tell you that, but I'm too dumb. I can't do it. I'm not smart enough. I don't understand this. I'm stressed'" (RTO staff, Tas, 2017).

For many YP WE identified severe challenges such as mental health, self-esteem/self-efficacy, housing insecurity, low LLN skills, low confidence and awareness of opportunities, instability, safety issues, financial problems, residing in remote locations, anxiety, financial hardship and family problems

Lack of alignment with social services sector = fragmentation, duplicated effort.

Prescriptive nature of CBT can mean lack of flexibility, creativity or innovation in teaching practice.

Pre-supposed level of readiness: clear intent, relevant experience and adequate motivation on the part of the learner.

Young people's fundamental needs are not met – they disengage, compounding low self-efficacy and low motivation.

SWITCHING LANES IN VET: WHAT ARE YOUNG PEOPLE TELLING US?

Limited flexibility and scope for agency, compounded by funding schemes which constrain real choice.

"They should have a 'try day'... If they know what's it like beforehand they'll want to do it. If they don't know what it's like they're going to get there and be like "well this is a waste of time"." (young female)

"...she helped me come up with some ideas and stuff, but... I was restricted by my situation of what I was able to do, which is frustrating. Because I have a diploma so I'm not allowed to do anything equal or lower to that without paying full fees, which I couldn't afford". (young female at Foyer)

"I'd like to go do the course but it's just their fee [...] if the fee was about 100 bucks or something that's fine, I'd be able to do that. But 355 bucks? That's pathetic for a 12 week course [...] That's breaking my budget a bit." (young male)

Young people still developing identities, direction(s) in life, and self-confidence; many are uncertain about their vocational aspirations and options.

Course subsidies and student loan scheme do not recognise this – constrain choice and flexibility in ways that higher education does not.

E.G. Commonwealth administered VET Student Loan (VSL) has limited eligibility for quals, excludes below diploma level and caps at \$15K. It also includes up front fees, and a 20% tax on recipients of the VSL

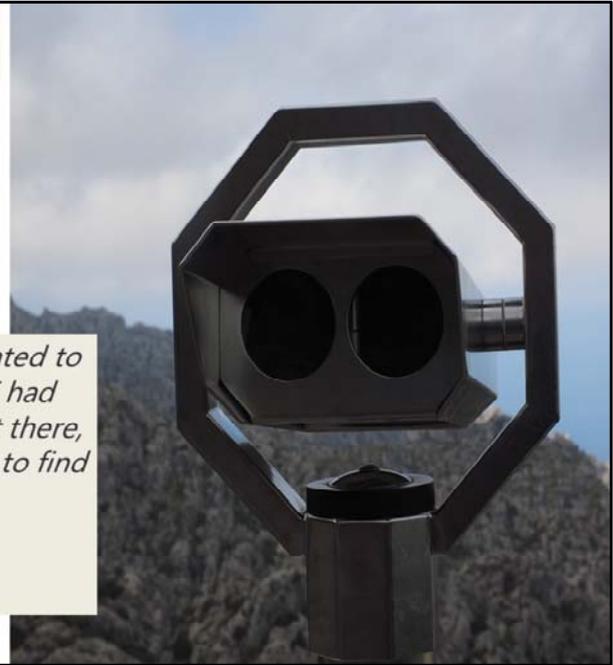
HECS Uni – no up-front fees, not linked to specific courses for eligibility, and allows mobility and change of mind

LINE OF SIGHT IN VET: WHAT ARE YOUNG PEOPLE TELLING US?

Pathways through school, VET, higher education and on to work (or variations) don't flow.

'I had some ideas of where I wanted to go and who I wanted to be but I had absolutely no idea of how to get there, or where to start, or even where to find the support.'

(young person, regional Victoria)



No line of sight through VET to a career for young people – and not the right kind of investment and support in building their social capital to get a job

Factors evident at the **'VET sector and macro-systemic levels'** include the ever-changing and opaque subsidy systems, the limitations of competency based training and training packages, adult learning pedagogies misapplied to early school leavers, weak links with industry, an embattled workforce, and poor regulation of standards. This includes functional pathways between school, VET, and higher ed for the purposes of a meaningful career pathway

OTHER BARRIERS: WHAT ARE YOUNG PEOPLE TELLING US?

Compounded by financial and transport barriers...

"I don't live with my parents... so I can't get my drivers' license as easily as I would like. I'm trying to get my motorbike license, but it's paying it that's the problem. That's the reason I'm trying to get a job, which is really hard when working jobs require you to have a license". (young female)

"The problem was that I had to travel down. I had to catch a bus every day. And the fact that it was money out of my pocket made it a little bit harder." (young male)

"A lot of people from the schools think that TAFE is for dropouts and I was getting a lot of that... I got a lot of attitude from them". (young male)

"It's more like they threaten you in a way, as in, 'Hey, if you don't finish school, you're going to TAFE'" (young male)

"I could Google it or something, but I didn't have internet then. I didn't have a phone. I didn't have credit. Because I didn't have a job, I didn't have money for those things" (young female)

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And of course, issues of income insecurity, housing insecurity and transport compound and amplify these issues...

SO WHAT DOES THIS TELL US? YOUNG PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE

They have:

- Strengths and skills
- Aspirations and ambition
- Hopes and dreams

“People want to have savings, people want to go to other countries, people want to explore, people want to do things. If you don't have a full-time job you can't do that. I just need a job so I can move ahead in life”.
(young male)



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So what does all of this mean for reform of VET? It means young people are complex, whole humans – they come to VET with strengths, aspirations, ambitions etc....

Dommers, E, Myconos, G, Swain, L, Yung, S & Clarke K 2017, *Engaging young early school leavers in vocational training*, NCVET, Adelaide.

Fuller, C & Macfadyen, T 2012, "What's with your grades?" Students' motivation for and experiences of vocational courses in further education', *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, vol.64, no.1, pp.87–101.

Rainey, L, Simons, M, Pudney, V & Hughes, E 2008, *What choice? An evaluation of career development services for young people*, NCVET, Adelaide.

Beddie, F, Hargreaves, J & Atkinson, G 2017, *Evolution not revolution: views on training products reform*, Summary Report, NCVET, Adelaide.

Myconos, Clarke and Te Riele 2016, p
OECD 2016b, *Investing in Youth: Australia*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

BUT THE SYSTEM DOESN'T RECOGNISE THIS

...but also often:

- Low levels of self-esteem, self-efficacy and motivation
- Low LLN skills, undiagnosed learning difficulties
- Limited social capital
- Unmet mental and/or physical health and wellbeing needs
- Insecure housing and financial insecurity
- Little awareness of strengths and options/pathways

"They [need to] offer support for mental health, so if you feel really anxious or you're having a really bad time there's people here that you can talk to..."
(young male)



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Yet many also experience a range of challenges...

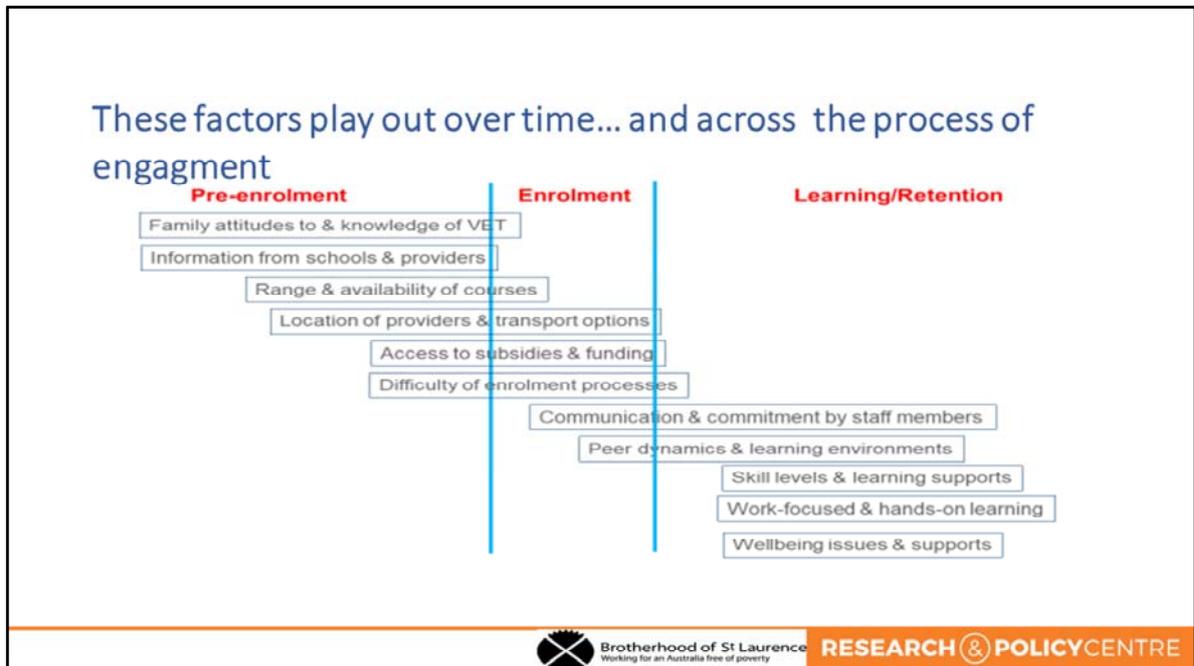
They bring all of this – strengths and challenges – with them to VET. Yet the system doesn't recognise or reflect who they are – no guidance, no recognition in teaching approach, no room to change their mind, not sufficient real world opportunities to inform their decision making and motivate them to learn

If VET is to be successful – successful in meeting the needs of industry as well as learners as work changes we will need a new approach that enables us to keep this complexity in scope – the interconnected personal, social and environmental factors that shape student's capacity to build capabilities for education, work and participation in their communities.

We will need to restore a learner centred, industry engaged approach that recognises the critical importance of informed learner choice and agency while also providing them with the potential for lifelong learning, to grow into jobs, vocational streams

In VET, this means that we need to understand:

- “the different kinds and levels of resource input required by different groups of learners” (Tikly, 2013: 29); and
- the things that individuals need in order to be empowered to exercise their agency in VET (i.e. information, resources and opportunities).



A temporal lens.

The diagram maps the most significant factors influencing participation as they occur, using pre-enrolment, enrolment, learning and retention phases as temporal markers (Dommers et al 2016). This is important because it reminds us that a successful experience with vocational training is often predicated on experiences prior to commencement.



WE NEED A NEW SOCIAL SETTLEMENT IN VET

One that acknowledges the needs of the learner

THE PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING OUR LEARNER CENTRED VISION...

- Engaged learners
- Supported learners
- Skilled, capable and independent learners
- Stewardship for connected successful learners
- Recognition and enabling of learner's interests and priorities

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Changing the prevailing narrative

Education systems ought be responsible for more than imparting technical skills, improving one's status and/or employability, or individual or collective wealth. While these are vital imperatives, we maintain that the principles upon which Australia's VET system are based should better acknowledge a wider range of the goals and aspirations: those we believe would be the outcomes of a learner-centred approach. We thus seek to elevate outcomes of learning that are too often ignored and that are, increasingly, fading from view in the policy discourse relating to vocational training.

We call for a high-level re-orientation of system's organizing principles that counters the prevailing 'industry/employer-first/led' and 'industry/employer-needs' mantra. Central to this re-orientation is consideration of an enhanced Kangan-era emphasis on learner-centred and life-long learning, and the importance of VET not only to business and individual economic interests, but to social inclusion and cohesion.

TEngaged learners, via...

- Appropriate, stimulating and relevant pedagogy to better ensure learners access, acquire and are able to retrieve knowledge.
- Varied learning settings are introduced that are accessible, that motivate and facilitate engagement, and are equipped with the facilities, technologies and amenities needed facilitate learning.

Skilled, capable, and independent learners, via...

- A more holistic view of abilities, aptitudes, and capacities.
- Curricula that is relevant to the learner and that inspires interest.
- Pedagogy that leads to the acquisition of skills that enable the learner to explore and engage with specific fields of enquiry.

- Educators that accept the responsibility of fostering—directly or indirectly—greater confidence, communication skills, self-awareness and a capacity to negotiate challenges. This means building the learner’s agency, i.e. their ability to act independently or collaboratively with regard to their own or group interests.

Supported learners, via...

- Learning and wellbeing supports—accessed in situ or through referral—that help as far as possible to address the many psycho-social and socio-economic variables that help or hinder learners’ engagement.
- Relationship-building that relies on a strengths-based approach, and that is underpinned by respect for individual dignity.

Stewardship for connected learners, via...

- Government supported growth of well aligned educational and other service/business eco-systems: that is, a commitment to building and sustaining networks across educational, business, governmental and service landscapes.
- Collaborations across these eco-systems, where a range of non-educational stakeholders can assist learners along their journey.

Awareness of learners’ interests and priorities, including...

- New or improved technical and/or ‘foundation’ skills.
- The capacity to secure an income through meaningful employment and/or re-adjust from old to new employment landscapes.
- Autonomy and the capacity to pursue passions, develop aptitudes and interests, and an understanding of their capacities and potential.
- Improved confidence, social competence and ability to negotiate changing circumstances.
- Better social connectedness and the capacity to contribute to the broader community.
- Capacity to transition to higher education.

A Learner Centred Approach: So What's THE OFFER?

- **Student Voice, Equity and Access** in key agencies and bodies across VET
- **Reform of the VET loans scheme**
- **Changes to Training curriculum** to find meaningful employment and adapt to changed labour market (Wheelahan – voc. streams & productive capabilities).
- A **teaching approach** which builds skills AND self-confidence, motivation and aspiration
- **Ensure Seamless pathways** through education systems and levels with the capacity for students to change their minds and experiment without onerous penalties.
- **Vocational guidance and navigational support** particularly at enrolment and initial engagement.



So what does a learner centered capabilities based VET offer for young people look like? It has these components.

To achieve this ideal I want to propose a host of reforms-some relatively innocuous, and others quite confronting-that cumulatively would remake VET in Australia as 'learner-centred)

(Student voice, equity and access

- Student representation should be a routine fixture in key agencies and bodies: across VET related federal and state government, training provider, and industry-based stakeholder levels.
- A nation-wide advisory council should be created—with national student representation and modelled on the former National VET Equity Advisory Council—entrusted with the task of promoting awareness and reform measures for the benefit of disadvantaged students.

Changes to the curricula and pedagogy

- The design of qualifications and accredited courses should be considered that enable greater mobility for across industries and sectors. This means promoting in qualification and course design non-technical skills, 'foundation skills', 'skill-sets', and 'micro-credentials' alongside core technical skills and competencies. Such changes would equip learners with the capacity to better negotiate changes within industries and the labour market, and not be trapped by over-specialization.

- **Reform the VET Student Loans scheme**
- Extend eligibility for VET loans to students undertaking Cert IV (currently loans are only available for Diplomas and above)
- Remove the prohibitive ‘loan fee’ – effectively a 20% tax on recipients of the VSL—and the relatively low repayment threshold tax burdens from VET loan schemes to create greater parity with HECS-HELP available to university students
- Extend the range of courses covered by the VSL.
- Allow variation of the loan contract after commencement to enable mobility across courses in situations where changes are necessary.
- **Targeted support for vulnerable learners**
- Reforms should put in place mandated requirements of registered training organizations to make available—on site or through referral—a comprehensive range of learning and wellbeing supports. To this end, training organizations should be assisted in creating and accessing cross-sector networks of specialist services.
- Needs based funding regimes, now a feature of secondary school education, should be introduced to ensure those most in need are assisted. Targeted funding would flow to eligible providers: i.e. those that cater of a high proportion of disadvantaged learners (e.g. TAFEs, community-based RTOs).
- Eligibility would rest on the percentage of enrolled students from designated ‘equity groups’ (parallels include the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability regime (NCCD) that provides needs-based funding for Special Assistance Schools catering for high-needs young people and NSW government’s ACE Community Service Obligation (CSO) Program which funds intensive support for students encountering significant barriers to education.

Transitions guidance and linkages

- There is an important role for TAFE institutes in particular here, who should be resourced to work alongside secondary schools to facilitate work experience and volunteer work, and to promote work integrated learning opportunities in collaboration with employers.
- Governments should fund well-resourced career advisory programs and information in schools, and help up-skill school career advisors. A nation-wide public relations campaign should be funded to highlight the many virtues of vocational training, particularly in contrast to university education.
- There is a need for the introduction of a school-based vocational curriculum for VETis, commencing as early as year 9, and that dovetail with senior secondary curricula. All promotional material and operational guides for VETis should be reviewed and simplified to more clearly articulate the purpose, opportunities, and outcomes associated with VETis programs.

Arrest the decline in apprenticeships and traineeships

- Better leverage the Group Training Organisation model to improve pastoral care for apprentices and expand opportunities for businesses to take on people without carrying the employment risk.

- Create better incentives for employers to hire people as apprentices and trainees in areas of skills shortage and priority occupation areas.
- Establish a dedicated trainee and apprenticeship scheme in the Australian public sector to ensure that entry-level opportunities are available in government departments and agencies for people who experience disadvantage in the labour market.
- Require contractors undertaking publicly-funded projects of substantial size to provide structured employment and training opportunities
- Promote more 'fast-track' apprenticeships for mature aged workers undertaking re-skilling and adjustment from old to new sectors

TAFEs as anchors and bridges

- The status of TAFEs should be enhanced in acknowledgement of their pivotal role in communities and in offering place-based responses to communities' needs. Their capacity to reach out and connect with small and/or remote communities should be enhanced through funding for micro-campuses, annexes, and in situ training.
 - A funding stream and incentives should be available to promote local collaborations between TAFE institutes, ACE sector providers and community-based organizations for co-delivery, co-location and where appropriate, and co-design of transitional pathways. Stronger links between TAFEs and LLENs would be essential.
 - As noted, TAFE institutes should be resourced to work alongside secondary schools to facilitate work experience and volunteer work; to promote work integrated learning opportunities in collaboration with employers; provide career advisory programs and information in schools, and help up-skill school career advisors; and play host to more trade training centres in schools.
- **Integrated support** for mental health, housing insecurity and financial insecurity.
- **Real world opportunities** such as work experience and network building with employers.
- Freedom to **change their minds** as their learnings grow.

A Learner Centred Approach: So What's THE OFFER?

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SO HOW TO DO IT IN PRACTICE?

- This offer isn't possible in the current fragmented and eroded VET landscape
- What is required is an 'anchor' institution – which can speak to these levels, both down and up
- TAFE is uniquely positioned to serve as this anchor
- Let's demonstrate with a case study...



But in the complex, fragmented and top down VET system that we've outlined so far, this offer is almost impossible.

Doing it requires an anchor which speaks to both the bottom up, and the top down – TAFE is uniquely positioned for this role.

What's more, we've been trying to implement this offer in place with Kangan TAFE since 2013 – we'll take you through it now to illustrate

**CASE STUDY: TAFE AS ANCHOR FOR LEARNER CENTRED
APPROACH TO VET IN COMMUNITY**

WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE? BSL AND BKI CASE STUDY

- BSL and Kangan TAFE in partnerships since 2013 for youth education and training offer in Hume.
- Kangan TAFE is the anchor in place – the gateway to training and employment.
- Working from a shared capabilities/Advantaged Thinking approach which harnesses multisectoral effort.
- Complementary expertise for service development and practice improvement.



Talk to how the work started, Foyer, then expanded etc.

Started with Education First Youth Foyer (2013):

- Student accommodation for YP 16–24 who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- Located on TAFE campuses and co-delivered by TAFE institutes, housing providers and youth support partners.

Built up Cert. I in Developing Independence (2013-19):

- Co-developed by BSL, Hannover and TAFE for use in EFY Foyers.
- Goal-setting and pathway planning course, focused on building agency and aspiration for engagement in education.
- Co-delivery by a TAFE teacher and youth development

worker so as to benefit from their complementary expertise.

- Adapted for delivery to young people in Youth Justice and Out-of-Home Care settings.

Co-location of active labour market programs on campus (2016):

- Transition to Work, Refugee Support Pilot (both Fed. funded) and Reconnect (State funded) located on TAFE campus.
- Streamlined access to Kangan's vocational guidance (Next Steps service).

BSL AND BKI CASE STUDY

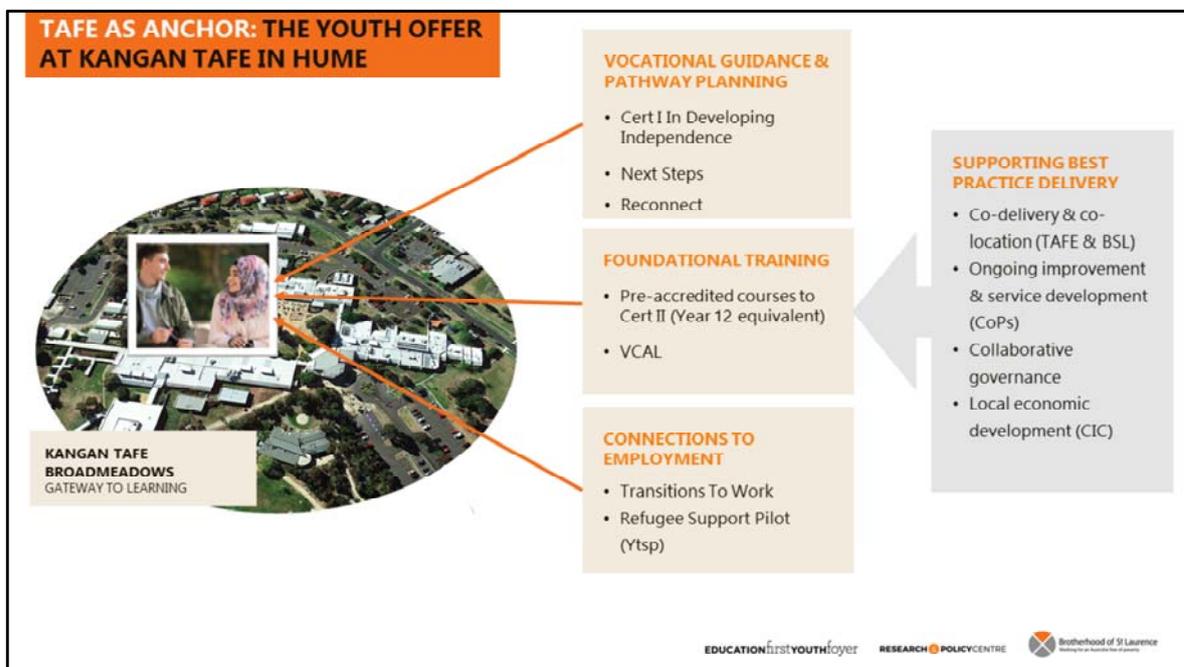
Not just education or service delivery – collaborative governance and innovation:

- **The Hume Community Investment Committee**, Bringing together employers, Economic Development of Local Government, BSL and TAFE to drive local social and economic development for young people.
- **Communities of Practice** to drive ongoing improvement and innovation in training and service delivery.



REFERENCE WHEELAHAN'S COMMUNITIES OF TRUST

People round the table pic



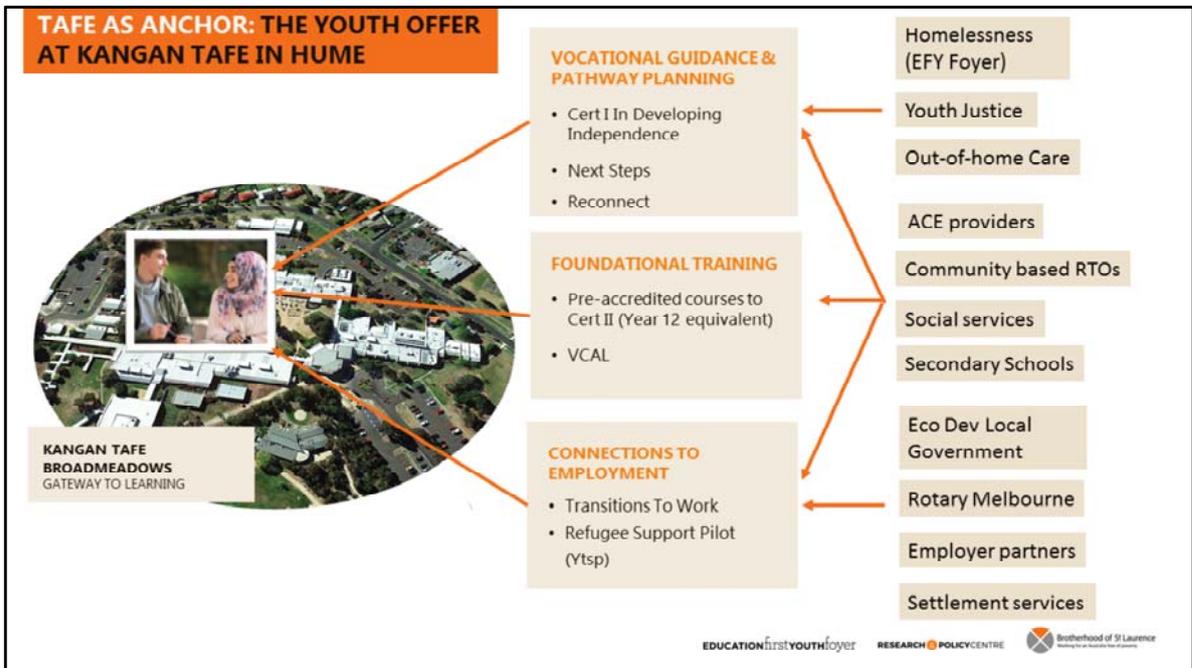
This is the offer to young people at Kangan TAFE – if we remember back to the previous section where we heard from young people about what the barriers for them in VET are, we can see how these are being addressed.

With Kangan as the anchor in place – the offer covers guidance, pathway planning and navigational support through the Cert 1 in DI (goal setting, future focused); the Next Steps career guidance service, and the state based Reconnect service.

It covers appropriate training, particularly pre-accred to Cert 2

And it covers the line of sight to a job, and social capital building, through the co-location of the active labour market programs.

Critically – this offer is supported by delivery approaches that recognise the complexity of young people’s situation – through co-delivery, co-design and ongoing service improvement; AND focus on economic development and collaborative governance with industry, local government, TAFE and the community sector (top-down, bottom-up in practice).



Here are the diverse, multi-sectoral networks enabling the offer in Hume...

WHAT ARE REACHING FOR? TAFES AS...

- Anchors into their community
- Anchors into the VET sector and eco-system
- Anchors into school and higher ed
- Anchors for excellence in delivery



So what are we reaching for with this?

- Anchors into their community – bringing together different sector and expertise and a site for collaborative work
- Anchors the VET sector or ecosystem – ie pathways and partnerships (incl. with ACE), but also as demonstration sites for excellence for other providers
- Anchors into school and higher ed – meaning pathways and partnerships, bi-directional training pathways (incl modules)

- Anchors for excellence in delivery. This means the focal point for the key offer needed – incl. vocational guidance, appropriate pre-accredited and foundational curriculum and training, appropriate teaching approach...

But for this to work at scale, it needs attention and effort at multiple levels of the system...

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SYSTEM

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SYSTEM?

All of this points us to some priority areas for investment (of effort and resources) and some places to start...

Policy:

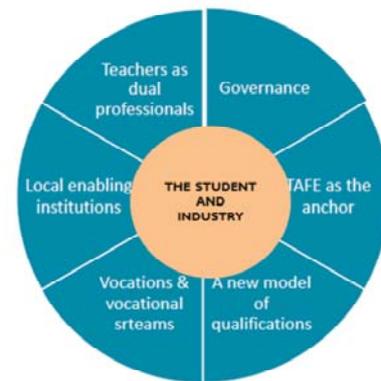
- Commonwealth/State tensions re governance, responsibility and funding
- Funding entitlements and student loans

Governance/voices at the table:

- Strategic roadmap for VET
- NVEAC like body

Sector capacity:

- Teacher training
- Institutional capacity for networking and collaboration



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For a top down, bottom up approach, we need to enable the voice of the learner in the design of the system (E.g. through NVEAC, data, student voice in governance at all levels)

Shared interests

It is important to note that what is proposed here is not in direct conflict with the interests and needs of employers. Indeed, a refrain is evident in numerous studies into changing economic conditions, the impacts on employers, and how they might weather change and prosper.

Employers have clearly articulated a demand for employees that are adaptable, collaborative, and able to problem-solve. All of these are important outcomes of a learner-centred approach. Such skills now sit alongside technical skills in employers' assessments of needs, and are particularly important in emerging sectors—e.g. health care and social assistance—that require a high degree of interpersonal and relational literacy

We need to resource the community effort piece – and the anchoring of this in TAFE – this means both funding and investment in workforce/institutional capacity (teacher training, grants for community engagement, structures for ongoing practice improvement)

We need to reform structures – particularly subsidies and loans – to enable agency, flexibility and choice for students on par with higher ed (e.g. integrate loan schemes)

To achieve this we need a strategic roadmap that clearly articulates the role and purpose of VET, and that establishes attainment goals for various cohorts (ACIL 2015). It needs to moderate the 'industry-first/led' and 'industry-needs' mantra; and revive the Kangan-era emphasis on student-centred and life-long learning, and the importance of VET to social cohesion and community. This requires fit-for-purpose policy mechanisms at the COAG level

The constitution of a permanent, nation-wide, authority entrusted with the task of overseeing the strategic direction of VET, and one that defers to the states on agreed upon operational aspects (e.g. the operation of TAFEs).

Integrate the university and VET based loans schemes (HECS-HELP and VSL), with the Commonwealth assuming responsibility for funding and administering all qualifications above certificate IV Diploma (straddling university and VET providers).

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I want to end by circling back to a point touched on briefly earlier—pedagogy and curricula—but that bears on how VET can better prepare learners for the work of the future.

Reforms to the curriculum and pedagogy

VET system's default competency-based training (CBT) has its limitations in the context of developing such non-technical skills (Hodge 2018). Many regard CBT as too rigid and prescriptive. The CBT regime can also limit the educators' capacity to build the relationships required to understand and meet student needs. Strict adherence to CBT can limit understanding of students and development of skills or aptitudes for contemporary work.

By extension, training packages—their qualifications, and other accredited courses—do not pay due regard to the needs and interests of disadvantaged students and, moreover, can restrict learning to a narrow and distorted range of skills.

This issue is particularly important given the need to enable mobility and portability of skills for students across sectors and an every changing labour market.

Another concern is that pedagogies may pre-suppose a relatively high level of readiness on the part of the learner: that is, clear intent, relevant experience and adequate motivation on the part of the learner.

Yet many young students—and particularly early school leavers, who are increasingly reliant on the VET sector—have levels of dependence and inexperience that training providers struggle to address.

A growing chorus of expert opinion now points to the need for modifications, or

wholesale changes, to the system of CBT, training packages (qualifications and accredited courses), and the pedagogies they require and encourage (Wheelahan et al 2015; Beddie et al 2017; Shubert et al 2018; Aust Govt 2017(a, b)).

There are calls for the improvement of foundational and ‘soft skills’ of students—particularly the young early school leavers—who would benefit most from developing a range of non-technical skills (as above). Recommendations for change include:

- Ensuring training products—starting at certificate I and II levels—incorporate and promote ‘future work skills’, ‘foundation level skills’, alongside the all-important ‘technical skills’ (Aust Govt 2017(a,b). This will enable less prescriptive and overly standardized learning,
- Overhauling the design process for qualifications and accredited courses in ways that develop a broader range of skills, and that allow learners greater mobility within and across sectors. Such reform—expressed most comprehensively by Wheelahan et al under the banner of the ‘capabilities approach’—is a response to the very weak links between current qualifications and their associated professions (Wheelahan et al 2015),
- Promoting workforce development into pedagogies that nurture a range of non-technical skills).

END



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Reform: in the wake of the Joyce Review



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A new Architecture

National Skills Commission (and Commissioner)
A National Careers Institute
Pilot of 2 industry owned Skills Organisations
10 New National Industry training hubs
Foundation Skills for Your Future Program
Apprenticeships
Commonwealth Training Scholarship for Young Australians

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A new architecture

A (new) **National Skills Commission (and Commissioner)**

...which is to sit under the COAG-ISC and ASQA, with responsibility for funding allocations: i.e. to work out course subsidy levels with state and territory governments, and allocate all Commonwealth VET funding on behalf of the Minister;

A (new) **National Careers Institute**

...to improve career advice across tertiary education; a VET Information strategy for the NSC (\$6.1m); Partnership competitive grants (\$10m, for schools, employers, VET, for employer aligned projects; up to 350k) **Unclear whether** the NCI will undertake all/other responsibilities recommended by Joyce: Publish info on careers pathways and demand; oversee a single govt website/app; lead public marketing campaign to improve VET's reputation (6.9); help embed vocational pathways into secondary curriculum from Y9. (7.2)

(New) Piloting of two 'Industry-owned' **Skills Organisations**

...in the growth areas of human services and digital technologies to bring more industry experience to the task of developing qualifications compared with current arrangements. **Unclear whether** the SOs will undertake all/other responsibilities recommended by Joyce: Industry owned-run (3-5y); oversee development of quals; assess skills needs, marketing, supports for apprentices (replacing

AASN, 5.11), endorsing stand-out RTOs(4); specifying benchmark hours (re CBT) and for work-placement (4.8); more short term credentials (skills-sets, or micro-cred)(4.11); builds VETis links and determines benchmarking hours (7.8)

For VET in rural and remote Australia

...the trial of 10 (new) national Industry Training Hubs (J5.13) which would support school-based VET in regions with high youth unemployment (\$67.5m)

...Commonwealth Scholarships Program for Young Australians (\$8.2m).

Foundation skills (J8)

...Establish the Foundation Skills for Your Future program (\$62.4m) to support people who are currently employed or recently unemployed, to identify any literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs and where appropriate, access training, including \$9.9 million for four Indigenous delivery pilots in remote communities. To include 4 pilots providing services in remote communities.

Apprenticeships (J5)

...establish an Additional Identified Skills Shortage Payment (\$156.3m) available to employers and apprentices for up to 80,000 new apprenticeships in occupations experiencing national skill shortages
revised arrangements for the Australian Apprenticeship Incentives Program (\$44m).

Additional commitments

...Commonwealth training scholarship for Young Australians (\$8.2m @15k), for those in eligible regions, indig, ex-ADF, disability, CALD.

Potential Joyce Review Recommendations not yet adopted

Funding Changes
Re branding
Reform to quality of courses
Specific responses to highly disadvantaged cohorts
Place focused responses

What may be imminent: potentially beneficial Joyce Review recommendations not yet adopted

- **Funding Changes**
- 'Explore funding models for wrap-around supports in high disadvantaged communities, so it is easier to access assistance' (8.7)
- Re-branding of system 'Skills education' (2.6)
- Introduction of benchmark time/hours (3.9); proficiency based assessment (3.12); prospect of independent assessment and re-assessment (3.10)
- Comm and states to explore fee free foundation level education for LLN/D up to ACSF I2(8.1); and standardize, make consistent access to Fnd level education (8.2)
- Support delivery modes of LLND that include RTOs, intensive short courses e.g. AMEP, and workplace based (e.g. WEP) (8.3)
- VETis, co-funded by states and Comm (7.7) and tending towards dual system; but through the agency of 'privately owned' SO.
- VSL Student Ombudsman to be replaced with a VET Ombudsman (3.15)
- Revamp of apprenticeship incentives schemes, and closer alignment with in-demand skills/sectors (5.10)
- Regional/remote: Regional study hubs (5.13); loadings (5.6); NT, Nth Qld, WA, SA .
- Govt subsidy levels to be linked to cost of provision, and loadings for rural and remote disadvantaged (5.6).
- Prospect of co-funding of courses with states (5.7)

Weaknesses of the Joyce review (and of the government's response).

- The interests of employers are privileged, and they are enlisted to manage the system.
- No equity framework per se: instead, uses 'high disadvantaged regional and remote' as the prism, as well as LLN/Dig skills specifically.
- Role of TAFES minimised (5.7)
- Nothing on parity with universities
- Nothing on reform to the VET Student Loan Scheme.
- Nothing on Workforce development/status
- Nothing on ACE and non-accredited learning.