



#### Queensland Catholic Education Commission

Level 1, 143 Edward Street, Brisbane Qld 4000

GPO Box 2441, Brisbane Qld 4001

Ph +61 7 3316 5800 Fax +61 7 3316 5880

email: [enquiries@qcec.catholic.edu.au](mailto:enquiries@qcec.catholic.edu.au)

[www.qcec.catholic.edu.au](http://www.qcec.catholic.edu.au)

ABN: 57 525 935 419

# QCEC Response to the Skills for Queensland Discussion paper

October 2018

---

## Introduction

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Queensland Government Department of Employment, Small Business and Training: *Skills for Queensland Discussion paper*. QCEC supports the government's statement that vocational education and training (VET) should be valued for the pathway VET provides to fulfilling and rewarding employment. QCEC appreciates and promotes the importance of equitable access to high quality and affordable VET for students and the value of school and industry partnerships.

QCEC is the peak strategic body with state-wide responsibilities for Catholic schooling in Queensland. Feedback provided in this submission has been gathered from Catholic School Authorities through the QCEC VET and Vocational Learning Network. Catholic School Authorities operate a total of 304 Catholic schools, including 105 secondary schools, that educate more than 147,000 students in Queensland.

The QCEC Position Statement on *VET and Vocational Learning in Catholic Schools in Queensland* states that VET provides 'opportunities to meet the needs of young people in Catholic schools and contributes to a holistic and engaging education'. Nearly 50 percent of students who completed Year 12 at QCEC Catholic secondary schools in 2017 received a VET qualification. Over 9300 VET Certificates in total were awarded to these students.

## Executive Summary

QCEC recognises the relevance of the government's focus on the three themes identified for feedback to contribute to the development of a VET Strategy:

- meeting the need for skills through industry advice and market settings
- the role of providers in delivering VET services
- encouraging all Queenslanders to participate in VET.

These themes provide QCEC with adequate scope to provide a Queensland Catholic schools perspective.

QCEC supports the importance of industry engagement to identify the skills and training required for changing workforce needs. QCEC suggests consideration be given to recognition of industry advised new or changed skill sets as credit, microcredentials, towards a qualification.

Consideration of market settings for funding and delivery of VET is important for equity of access.

Consideration to increase funding to subsidise travel and accommodation for remote, rural and regional

students is recommended by QCEC. Increased funding to support school VET administration and greater access to funded VET in School is also encouraged.

QCEC acknowledges the importance of choice of public and private VET providers to ensuring quality, flexibility and cost competitiveness for schools. TAFE Queensland is seen as an important and valuable RTO by Catholic schools, although some concerns exist around communication and flexibility of service. Regional TAFE liaison officers could assist with these concerns. In smaller communities, community groups to assist with connecting schools and businesses.

QCEC recognises the challenge for schools to improve the perceptions of VET when compared to higher education pathways. A way to improve VET's profile could be to include the required training qualification completed by teachers as part of their teaching qualification. A government supported central data base could be the communication reference for schools, students and parents to promote the profile of VET.

Effective partnerships between schools and industry are critical to ensure quality of VET undertaken by students in Queensland Catholic schools and QCEC supports the development of a system model or framework to support consistency and evidence of evaluation and identification of effective partnerships. QCEC supports the concept of the government's Gateway to Industry Schools Program and suggests the government consider investigating further resourcing for this program.

QCEC provides the following feedback, responding to relevant questions, under each of the paper's three themes provided in the *Skills for Queensland Discussion paper*.

## Responses

### 1. Meeting the need for skills through industry advice and market settings

#### a. Industry engagement

Changes and advances in technology, social change and globalisation continue to change the world of work and the required skills. The Department of Employment, Small Business and Training states on page ii of the Discussion paper that *The VET system must have the ability to adapt so that graduates can be job-ready*. QCEC agrees that VET offered in schools should be responsive to industry demand and initiatives. Currently schools can offer VET qualifications from Training Packages or Accredited Courses approved by ASQA. Development, approval and delivery takes about five years for Training Packages and several years for Accredited Courses which may not allow for timely responses to industry skill need changes by the VET system.

To support a timely response, a suggestion is to provide skill sets developed in response to industry need as an additional/replacement unit of a relevant VET course or as a stand-alone skill set that attracts credit recognition towards a qualification.

This would avoid the additional process of a full training package review and development and should enable VET providers to adapt more quickly to response to changes in skill demand and priorities. Skill sets have been identified as an example of micro-credentials:

- Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) spoke about micro-credentials and noted in a September 2018 article, *Lifelong learning and reskilling: the promise of microcredentials*, that 'Microcredentials recognise the achievement of a skill, skill sets or knowledge that is required by industry, professional associations, or the community'.
- KPMG released a report in August 2018, *Reimagining tertiary education: From binary system to ecosystem*, that referred to Micro-credentials as a way to enable students to gain skill sets in a timelier manner than traditional qualification.
- The Australian Government Department of Education and Training in their *Contextual Research for the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Review Report* published in April 2018 noted responses from stakeholders indicated the need for the AQF to consider 'on-time', 'in-place' skills development or micro-credentials.

b. Market settings

QCEC endorses the government's focus on funding to:

- raise participation in VET in industry identified priority and skill shortage areas
- encourage development of skills to meet future job needs.

Training needs of regional, rural and remote Queensland have been assisted by the availability of online VET courses. However, availability of online courses highlights the cost and reliability issues of Internet connection for schools in these areas. Cost of travel to work placements and availability of VET courses can be a barrier particularly for rural and remote students. Increased funds to subsidise travel and accommodation would support greater equity of access for students.

VET in Queensland schools is offered as standalone courses within the education program and provides opportunities for students to gain a qualification that is nationally recognised by the Australia Qualifications Framework. School based apprenticeships or traineeships are also available to students as part of VET offered in schools. Catholic secondary schools offer VET:

- I. As a School Registered Training Organisation (RTO). School RTOs can deliver up to Certificate IV level and QCAA has delegation from ASQA to register and audit these RTOs.
- II. By enrolling students in an external RTO. Schools can negotiate to have students attend the external RTO or have the VET course delivered at the school.
- III. By enrolling students in a School Based Apprenticeship or Traineeship (SAT).

School students can complete one VET qualification funded by the VET investment budget. Consideration given to funding an additional VET qualification for students would be appreciated by QCEC. For many schools and students, the cost of VET courses can be prohibitive. Funding an additional VET qualification could assist students to develop skills in complementary areas leading to more employment opportunities.

Further funding support for schools to assist with the ongoing increases in administration and management of VET would be welcome. Regardless of how VET is delivered there is a lot of administration and follow up to ensure the quality of student outcomes, assist with industry placement and monitoring of student progress.

The range and scale of the VET system results in an abundance of information and opportunities that schools need to keep abreast of and navigate many different sources of information. QCEC recommends consideration of a Government developed and maintained cross sector central database that enables schools and industry to connect for opportunities for work experience/work placement, (for all students not just VET), SATs, professional development opportunities for teachers to maintain VET currency and validation of VET assessment. The design of a central database could include online provision for industry to register availability for the different areas and schools identify relevant industry and register interest online and/or make contact would improve equity of access. This central database could be the point of reference for VET in schools in the same way that the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority is for senior syllabuses offered in schools.

Industry benefit from quality connections and partnerships with schools providing them with a pipeline of talent and target audiences for promoting industry pathway career advice. Industry provision of professional development to teachers builds their awareness and understanding of industry so they can provide relevant career advice and influence development of skills through VET assessment. Schools would benefit from having one reference area for industry connections, greater equity of access to industry and reduced administration costs. This database could also be utilised for communication of regional priority skills and skills shortages, bringing information into one place

## 2. The role of providers in delivering VET services

QCEC acknowledges improvements in the quality of training being provided by external public and private providers generally attributed to regulation by the Australian Skills Quality Authority and its move to a student-centred approach for audits. The NCVER *VET in Schools 2017* report shows Queensland's share of the total number of VET in schools' students has been consistently greater than 30% over the 2013 to 2017 period.

VET continues to be an important part of Queensland Catholic schools' education program with nearly 50% of students completing Year 12 with a VET qualification. The *2017 Next Steps Destination survey* for Queensland Catholic schools indicates that students who left school with a VET qualification were studying - a Bachelor Degree (31%); further VET qualification, including SATs (30%); or were employed (30%).

The majority of Queensland Catholic secondary schools are Registered Training Organisation (RTO). School RTOs deliver quality VET based on a student-centred approach and they should be recognised as significant providers of VET. Queensland Catholic secondary schools generally deliver VET to their students using combinations of their own school RTO and external providers, both public and private. QCEC considers having a choice of public and private VET providers important to ensuring quality, flexibility and cost competitiveness for schools.

TAFE Queensland is seen as an important and valuable RTO for Catholic schools to access. Feedback from Catholic School Authorities indicate schools are generally positive about the quality of training and resources provided by TAFE Queensland. However, additional feedback highlights some considerations:

- Some costs of courses are high compared to private providers.
- Not enough flexibility in provision of courses, for example schools would appreciate the availability of some SAT VET units being offered during school holidays.
- Limited offerings at some campuses.
- Improve the communication to schools regarding student attendance or performance.

## 3. Encouraging all Queenslanders to participate in VET

A recommendation to assist in addressing the above could be to make available regional TAFE school liaison officers across Queensland and clearly communicate this so schools know who to contact.

QCEC considers that VET plays a key role in supporting regional economic development. Schools in regional and remote areas generally rely on the same pool of small businesses as providers of work experience, SATs and career advice. A possible way to support schools to access and engage with small employers could be by community groups, such as Rotary and Lions, taking on a liaison role to facilitate connections between school and business.

QCEC endorses this focus of encouraging VET participation as a valid and valuable pathway for students. While there is ample research to support the social and economic benefits of VET, there is an ongoing challenge to improve the perceptions of VET when compared to higher education pathways.

QCEC encourages the government to promote VET as a viable and relevant pathway for students. This discussion paper could also be an opportunity to review the language and even the term VET for relevancy and viability for future positioning. A key benefit of VET is dual learning; knowledge and skills in theory and development and application of these in industry practice.

Teachers of VET require the TAE qualification (or equivalent), industry currency and attainment of qualification to at least the level of VET being delivered. This is all separate and in addition to their teacher qualifications required for teacher registration. A way to connect the two and possibly improve the VET profile could be by offering the TAE qualification as part of the Initial Teacher Education program.

Another way to assist with improving the profile of VET is for the government to provide schools, students and parents easier and one point of access to information about employment pathways and requirements to inform career choices at school. A Government resourced and maintained central data base could incorporate this information and include short videos from young people successful in using VET for employment and learning pathways.

QCEC acknowledges that engagement with industry is key to quality delivery of VET qualifications in Catholic schools. Relationships between school and industry are important for work experience/work placement, school-based apprenticeship and traineeship (SAT) opportunities, professional development for VET teacher currency and validation of assessment for VET. QCEC suggests that there are effective sustained school industry partnerships in practice. However, what is missing is a system model or framework to support consistency and evidence of evaluation and identification of effective partnerships. Importantly, this model or framework could guide development of school industry partnerships.

The Queensland Government already supports a program that promotes and supports industry school engagement and partnership, Gateway to Industry Schools Program (GISP). QCEC supports the concept of GISP which is about providing an intermediary (project manager) to broker and connect industry with schools to build ongoing relationships beneficial to both. This program currently has 6 projects, all with different industry area focuses, and receives about \$1m total in funding per year. GISP has been in operation for over 10 years and QCEC suggests a review and evaluation of the full program measured against appropriate and relevant outcomes is overdue. This should assist to identify areas for improvement to ensure relevancy of the program. In addition, QCEC recommends increased funding of this program to support resources and greater representation across Queensland to enable involvement of more schools. Currently funding for this program supports funding for one manager of each project for the whole of Queensland.

## Conclusion

QCEC welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Queensland Government Department of Employment, Small Business and Training: *Skills for Queensland Discussion paper*. QCEC are pleased to discuss any of the responses further. Please contact:

Marie Previte   Email [mariep@qcec.catholic.edu.au](mailto:mariep@qcec.catholic.edu.au)   Phone (07) 3316 5831



**Dr Lee-Anne Perry AM**  
Executive Director