

**Inquiry into the delivery of vocational education and training in regional, rural, and remote Queensland**

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# Queensland Parliament's Education, Employment and Training Committee inquiry into the delivery of vocational education and training (VET) in regional, rural, and remote Queensland

To: Chair, Education, Employment and Training Committee, Queensland Parliament

From: Professor Stephen Billett, School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> January 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to this Inquiry. The submission is based upon earlier, recent and current research projects in Queensland, across Australia and with insights from work undertaken in other countries (see Appendix 1). As such, it represents a synthesis of investigations, reviews, findings and observations rather than a single and comprehensive study addressing the specific focus of this Inquiry. That work remains to be undertaken. So, whilst there are strengths to the submission, there are also limitations in so far as there are extrapolations for projects not specifically aimed to inform this inquiry. Nevertheless, much of the findings from those investigations have relevance to it.

## **Key points**

Regional, rural and remote Queensland communities require and deserve effective vocational education and training (VET) provisions that will address their needs and advance their interests, from which the entire state will benefit.

The specific requirements for occupational practice and education provisions in those communities are central to their social and economic development, and in ways that may be distinct in the Brisbane – Gold Coast conurbation.

These communities have key strengths in terms of community support and engagement amongst education institutions, workplaces, government and non-government agencies, to an extent that is not always enjoyed elsewhere.

To optimise these strengths, augmenting the educational infrastructure (i.e., program provisions, institutions, educational expertise and leadership, partnerships) need to be prioritised and organised regionally through administrative infrastructures (regional decision-making bodies governance).

Whilst essential, being responsive to the social and economic needs of these communities is an insufficient metric by which VET systems should be directed, measured, and judged. They also need to bring about change through encouraging and supporting innovation, extending existing economic activities, and building local capacities in and for these communities, the enterprises and residents.

It is the further development of that education and administrative infrastructure at the regional level that needs to be a priority not only for those communities, but the contributions they can make to the entire state.

## **Executive summary**

Given that regional, rural and remote Queensland (R3Q) communities have particular and differentiated needs for achieving their social and economic goals, and optimising their capacities to do so, the development, governance, enactment and evaluation of VET, and localised bases for its provisions are increasingly important (see submission 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2022). These communities' specific industry sectors, enterprise configuration, employment requirements and their potential or actual employee profiles and the

education provisions in them are central to their social and economic development, and in ways that are regionally distinct.

These R3Q communities have key strengths in terms of community support and engagement amongst education institutions, workplaces, government and non-government agencies, that are of a kind not always available elsewhere. To optimise these strengths, augmenting the educational infrastructure (i.e., program provisions, institutions, educational expertise and leadership, partnerships) need to be prioritised and organised regionally through administrative infrastructures (regional decision-making bodies governance).

That optimisation needs to go beyond mere responsiveness. Whilst essential, being responsive to the existing social and economic needs of R3Q communities is an insufficient basis for VET systems and provisions to be directed, their processes and outcomes measured, and overall performance judged. Rather than only addressing 'what is', they should seek to realise 'what should and can be'. That is, they also need to bring about change through encouraging and supporting innovations in enterprises and communities, extending existing economic activities, and building local capacities in and for them.

To achieve these goals, perhaps, more than any other educational sector, VET requires effective social, administrative and educational infrastructure. The former is often given in these communities, but, there is probably scope for improving the administrative and educational infrastructure.

Social infrastructure includes partnerships that support work placements, work experiences, employment opportunities and enterprise expressions of needs and requirements. These tend to be far stronger, more visible and enduring in R3 communities than other kinds. Administrative infrastructure includes the intentional organisation and enactment of decision-making and governance arrangements associated with vocational educational provisions and their certification, including advisory processes and discretion to tailor and enact policy at the local level. Educational infrastructure includes the provision of intentional experiences to achieve learning outcomes, effective educational leadership reaching out into the community, the guidance and support of educators and extension of those efforts beyond educational institutions.

That infrastructure is essential for achieving the four key purposes of VET: i) engaging young people with VET; ii) assisting them identify occupations to which they are suited; iii) preparing them for occupations; and iv) continuing education across working life to meet changing needs and goals. In different ways, all of these are dependent on social, administrative and educational infrastructure.

Queensland, with its scale, distribution of regional centres, extensive rural areas and remote communities, and with regionally distinct economic activities makes a nationally distinct case for a decentred approach to the formulation, administration, enactment and evaluation of distribution of VET provision in being responsive to the R3Q communities' needs and advancement.

Investigations indicate that a key strength of these communities is that they often have social infrastructure that offer important attributes that are central to optimising VET provisions to meet these communities' need, yet governments struggle to generate elsewhere. That optimisation most likely occurs at the regional level as directed towards:

- i) building and sustaining partnerships amongst educational institutions, 'industry' groupings, local enterprises and communities;
- ii) informing communities locally (i.e. young people, parents, teachers) about the goals and processes of VET to encourage greater participation;
- iii) enacting the ET provisions that provide desired learning outcomes for graduates; and

iv) evaluating and continually informing and improving the VET provision.

Likely, governmental intervention in the form of decisions and actions associated with administrative and educational infrastructure needs to be best enacted at a regional level as are partnerships that can build upon and augment the existing social infrastructure. Again, whilst being responsive to local needs is a key priority, those interventions need to go beyond ‘responsiveness’, and encourage and support innovation, extending the economic activities currently occurring in these communities and building local capacity. That is, providing leadership, expertise, support and guidance within private and public sector organisations, educational institutions and reaching into the community more generally.

Consequently, efforts towards developing further the administrative and educational infrastructure associated with VET at regional levels would seem a key priority to meet the needs of rural, remote and regional communities.

In an initial submission to this Inquiry, a set of strengths and limitations associated with VET for R3Q communities was advanced and the need for a localised focus for action was outlined (May 2022). Here, these issues are elaborated further.

### **Realising a more effective VET provision in regional, rural and remote Queensland**

#### Preliminaries

There are at least five reasons to consider how vocational education and training can meet the needs of R3Q communities and advance their goals and capacities.

Firstly, it is necessary to understand these communities’ needs, capacities and potential further or comprehensively, as they are often quite regionally distinct. Given the distribution of industry sectors, enterprises focus and needs and capacities of individuals in those communities are not uniform.

Secondly, effective VET provisions are often closely aligned with their ability to addressing localised needs and yet are frequently reliant on local partnerships.

Thirdly, localised efforts to be responsive and to initiate change at the local level requires administrative and educational capacities that are sensitive to local imperatives and capacities and able to realise those outcomes.

Fourthly, building and sustaining local partnerships, such as those amongst schools, public VET provisions and workplaces, needs to be enacted, supported and sustained through local means and engagements.

Fifthly, whether being responsive or initiating innovations and change with these communities requires a decentred approach to the organisation, administration and evaluation of VET provisions, they cannot be parachuted in, so to speak.

A sixth and emerging strategic need is for a decentring of economic activities and social infrastructure in an era of increased global tensions and heightened risks to highly centralised infrastructure.

#### Purposes of VET provisions

Although often seen as being solely about skill formation, there are at least four key purposes for VET that are central to considerations for this Inquiry. These are: i) engaging young people with VET; ii) assisting them identify occupations to which they are suited; iii) preparing them for occupations; and iv) continuing education across working life to meet changing needs and goals. In different ways, all of these are dependent on social, administrative and educational infrastructure.

*i) Engaging young people in VET*

It has become necessary in recent times to have specific strategies to engage young people, their parents and teachers to consider vocational education as a postschool pathway. Globally (Clement, 2014), and Australia (Billett et al., 2020) and Queensland (Billett, 2022) by young people and their parent/carers. This has led to circuitous and often unproductive post-school educational pathways for young people and is distorting the demand for tertiary education through an emphasis on university entrance. Much of this preference has been buoyed by a growing negative sentiment directed towards vocational education in an era of high aspiration by young people and their familiars. Consequently, it has become necessary to find ways of actively engaging young people and their parents to consider vocational education legitimate and worthwhile postschool pathway, such as were identified in the recent Health Education to Employment Pathways project (2022).

*ii) Assisting young people identify occupations to which they are suited*

The high dropout rate from apprenticeship programs with its personal and societal cost and legacies (e.g., skill shortages) is indicative of the need to actively assist young Queensland make informed choices about their preferred occupations. A traditional role of vocational education has been to assist young people identify to what occupation they are suited (Dewey, 1917). That is, to provide experiences which expose young people to a range of occupations and allow them to trial them to see which ones are aligned with their interests and capacities. A key aim here is to meet the personal goals of rich working lives for young people and, secondly, to avoid the significant loss of personal and institutional investment that arises from the high dropout rates that have been experienced within vocational education, particularly through apprenticeships, and after graduation. Whilst much of this educational purpose might best be enacted prior to participation in vocational education, it may necessarily need to occur through it such as with occupational 'taster' and prevocational programs. Often, publicly funded vocational education institutions working in conjunction with local private and public enterprises is best placed to provide these kinds of experiences and engage young people in considered and informed discussions about these occupations (see Agribusiness GISP vignette below). Much of these initiatives are required to be enacted at the local level engaging schools, TAFE colleges, enterprises, young people and their parents.

*iii) Initial occupational preparation*

Effective initial occupational preparation, that is making VET students occupational ready on graduation, necessarily involves experiences within both the vocational education and workplace settings. Each of these sets of experiences are essential for developing occupational concepts, procedures and dispositions through combinations of direct instruction, experiencing and engaging incrementally in occupational tasks and the opportunity to practice, refine and hone those capacities through episodes of experiences. Added here is the importance of educationally and personally integrating the two sets of experiences so that their distinct contributions can be made explicit to and engage with by VET students. Consequently, understanding students' readiness of to engage in experiences for educational purposes, having structured workplace and educational experiences and their integration is require local organisation, coordination and enactment. These three qualities are unlikely to be completed successfully remotely and require teachers' knowledge of students' progress and capacities, extensive work experiences and educational expertise in integrating and making explicit the dual set of contributions. So, as with exemplar VET systems elsewhere (e.g., Germany) the provision of these experiences is organised, facilitated and enacted through local activities, interactions and governance (Deissinger & Hellwig, 2005).

*iv) Continuing education and training*

To retain workers, assist with enterprise viability and have capacities for innovations, the provision of ongoing development of skilfulness (i.e., continuing education and training) is imperative. As workplace requirements and occupational competence change, there is a need for workers of all kinds and classifications to engage in continuing education and training to maintain the currency of their capacities

and their employability. This, like educational efforts associated with seeking to more be broadly skilled or secure high-level qualifications emphasise the need for ongoing continuing education and training. However, unlike young people transitioning from school to work, working age Queenslanders need CET provisions that fit within existing commitments of work, family and community. How these provisions can best be organised needs to be accommodated and supported at the local level as combinations of online and face-to-face CET experiences are becoming required. More than preparing and enacting those provisions, understanding these working age adults needs, readiness and abilities to participate becomes more central, as does the circumstances in which these programs are enacted. Much of this can only be understood and enacted locally, as in regional, rural and remote communities.

So, these four purposes set out the kinds of provisions that are now required to be enacted through public vocational education and training institutions and by educators within them, often in conjunction with schoolteachers and also workplace practitioners.

### **Responses to specific focuses**

The inquiry examines the role of public vocational education and training (VET) providers in delivering localised and place-based training in regional, rural and remote Queensland, including:

#### 1. the role of public providers in VET delivery in rural, remote and regional Queensland, including: VET pathways, participation rates and outcomes

There are range of VET pathways, and the key issues are associated with them for R3Q communities are there: i) availability and accessibility and ii) engagement in them by young people. In many ways, both these sets of issues are shaped by local factors.

The existing VET Pathways include VET in schools (i.e., school-based apprenticeships/traineeships) and beyond schooling (i.e., industry/enterprise-based apprenticeships/traineeships), as well as the full-time or part-time participation in VET courses that are wholly institutional based. Across these pathways, there are variations in levels of participation, engagement and outcomes are often due to features of the regions, including characteristics of communities, industry profiles, employment, policies and practices employed in the regions, thus driving distinct needs in provisions of VET in both their focuses and educational processes. Engaging young people in these programs has become a priority for sustaining the numbers of young people being prepared occupations that VET serves, to meet the needs of the labour market and to avoid the kinds of skill shortages about which employee is constantly complain. This is important because there has been reported decline in VET participation. For example, the peak of 7.06% of working age adults participating in the VET sector in 2012, these numbers have fallen to 5% in 2017 (Noonan & Pilcher, 2018). Using a scenario based on current government higher education policy, and two-year trends in VET, there is a risk that participation rates in tertiary education will continue to decline perhaps almost six percentage points overall, or one-fifth, from their peak in 2012 (Noonan & Pilcher, 2018).

All of this suggests that beyond organising the provision of VET pathways that there is a need for efforts to secure young people's engagement in them. For instance, in the recent HEEP study which focused on encouraging young Queenslanders, particularly indigenous young people to engage in allied health occupations, it was found that there was a need to actively engage young people to get them to firstly consider vocational education and then the occupation that is their preference. From interviews with a range of stakeholders including young people it was found that these were central to attracting and recruiting young people to these occupations and their preparation:

- Engaging conditions - e.g., stable work and employment, opportunities; good pay, making friends;
- Engaging work - e.g., inspiring, caring and compassionate work; knowledge through family, helping community, learning new skills, diverse workforce;
- Engaging support - e.g., opportunities, tasters, mentoring, cadetships;
- Engaging Education – e.g., educational experiences that provided application outcomes and understanding and certification. (HEEP 2022)

For young people, and particularly for indigenous young people consideration of 'engagement' are important as for many of them they cannot imagine themselves participating in some of these work roles ("if you cannot see, it you cannot be it"). So, more than conventional career guidance there is likely to need to be specific experiences to introduce and expose these young people to those occupations and the educational pathways. Conversely, factors that would cause young people to disengage with the idea of participating in these programs were:

- Personal disengagement - e.g., lack of understanding of roles, negative experiences, distance from communities;
- Disengaging conditions - e.g., uncertainty, difficulty with practicums, shift work, lack of resources, patient reactions, impact on well-being. (HEEP 2022)

It is important to be reminded that in R3Q communities, issues of public transport, accessibility to places of work, and educational institutions may not be a straightforward or easy to access or affordable as those in metropolitan centres. Hence, considerations of how young people can come to access both work and educational institution may be a feature of considerations for these communities.

It has been suggested that the funding and provision models across VET and higher education are frequently fragmented and incoherent, with inconsistent relationships between the level of investment, the value of a course, and the level of student need (Dawkins, Hurley & Noonan, 2019).

In the current tertiary education system, the VET student often ends up paying similar or more money, for a course that receives less public subsidy, to end up in a job that pays less than the university equivalent. For instance, the same VET nursing diploma receives different levels of subsidy across states (Bolton, 2019). There are also more localised factors that need to be considered. For instance, young people from impoverished or unstable family backgrounds may simply lack the financial support to participate in these programs and that goes beyond the payment of fees. It extends to living costs and transport. For instance, in the HEEP project it was repeatedly advised that young indigenous students would need cadetships or other forms of financial support to participate in and complete VET programs.

These kind of considerations and conditions are those that need to be understood and responded to at the local or regional level where they can be most effectively comprehended and solutions advanced. For instance, one of the case studies in the current social partnership program emphasise the importance of providing transport to get students from indigenous communities to attend their courses. In the HEEP project one local coordinator referred to the importance of being respected within and able to engage within the indigenous community to encourage and support young people to attend their VET courses and the work-related components of them. Again, accessibility to transport was mentioned as being essential.

## 2. VET delivery for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including enablers and barriers

It has been shown that VET can be a robust tool for addressing inequalities related to educational achievement among Indigenous people (Bandias, Fuller & Larkin 2014; Cameron, Stuart & Bell 2017; Ceric, Small & Morrison 2022; Helme, 2005, 2007; Hill & Helme 2005). This can be realised by maximising their engagement in education programs, opening more paths, providing work experience and direct access to the job market. This set of considerations again raises the question of having an administrative infrastructure that can respond to these challenges at the local level and, the educational infrastructure to provide appropriate programs and experiences. All of that can best occur through decision-making and discretion at the local level. As VET programs are often engagement in classroom activities and focus on practical projects and active engagement in them, these are often attractive to young people, including young indigenous people. It has been suggested that VET deploys a pedagogical approach that is responsive to and more closely aligned with traditional Indigenous pedagogies and better meets indigenous students' needs (Helme, 2005). Associated here is that this approach can also enable Indigenous people to become actively involved in their community, and more broadly, in society at large (Brigham, 2006; Cameron, Stuart, & Bell 2017; Hamerton & Henare, 2017; Helme 2005, 2007). This reported to be the case, particularly when vocational courses are delivered in remote areas closer to Indigenous communities

(Hamerton & Henare 2017; Lawrence, 2006; Twyford, Crump & Anderson 2009). It also needs to be acknowledged that indigenous students in VET face hurdles linked to cultural insecurity and discrimination (Helme, 2007; Mangan & Trendle, 2010), language (Mangan & Trendle, 2010), geographical remoteness (Lawrence, 2006; Twyford et al., 2009), inequity (Dougherty & Harbaugh Macdonald, 2020; Lawrence, 2006) and inadequate programmes (Gwynne et al., 2020; Helme, 2005). In some cases, the consequences of these experiences are that it can be particularly difficult for Indigenous peoples to imagine themselves undertaking certain work (e.g., healthcare professions) when they cannot see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people performing that work. As mentioned above specific strategies are required to make understandings of that work accessible through initiatives such as 'walk-throughs', open days and work experiences that introduce and expose these young people to occupations for which they may be unaware and identify those with which they might participate. Again, effective responses to these challenges can best be met at the local level.

Issues of governance and partnership have led to challenges, including the long-term development of Indigenous communities (Hodgkins, 2015), which is widely acknowledged and again, emphasises actions, capacity building and engagements locally to manage these situations, thereby emphasising the importance of appropriate administrative infrastructure. In the recent HEEP study, a range of factors associated with young indigenous people's participation were identified localised efforts to address those issues that were largely local and regional. However, there is also the need for national or state-level strategies such as a consideration of paid internships, cadetships or other means of providing financial support to young people from impoverished communities who will otherwise be prevented from participation.

### **3. Major barriers to the provision of localised and place-based VET, and priority areas and cohorts in Queensland**

There will be different kinds and levels of opportunities for young people to engage in VET provisions and entry-level training across communities depending upon the existing set and kinds of work being undertaken in both public and private sector enterprises. Careful consideration needs to be given to the provision of the occasional education programs when there is no immediate local applicability, given the problems associated with not just the quality of the educational provision, but the prospects for providing meaningful and then, employment opportunities beyond graduation. Of course, if there is an imperative for occupations which are not currently being served then these might be provided teacher clearly either within the local community or elsewhere directed towards the goals of the targeted community. In circumstances where the occupational preparation is not available, this may require young people to travel to other regional communities where they can access appropriate educational and workplace experiences. Mere remote access to courses is unlikely to be sufficient. Central here is information available in the community about opportunities. In one case study, it was reportedly a disconnection amongst information parents received from national media (i.e., skill shortage in construction trades) and offering from schools (i.e., school-based traineeship/apprenticeship) and industry (i.e., not willing to take in students thus not being supportive). This again emphasises the importance not just of the educational and administrative infrastructure, but that within the community to engage and inform about the prospects for appropriate educational experiences.

As a state that has some unique elements of the geographic distribution of the population (e.g., distance between major regional centres) and amongst R3Q communities (e.g., arid and fertile rural, inland and coast), consideration needs to be given for moving outside of their immediate physical community if experiences to learn the preferred occupation cannot be found within theirs. This can include reporting the mobility of young people from regional areas to metropolitan cities to attend/participate in post-school pathway events. For example, in a partnership program, one aspect of its key purpose is the engagement of young and not so young Indigenous people in diverse post-school options, including a health service traineeship program. Although the block apprenticeship system has long been a feature of the Queensland approach this also needs to accommodate the needs of individuals from rural and remote communities for whom moving to larger centres brings with it sets of challenges and potential disruptions. Within regions,





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5. Opportunities for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training to facilitate improvements in these areas.

Many of the current initiatives being advanced through the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training are being directed towards the kinds of goals and outcomes that are referred to in this submission. For instance, the provision of Regional Advisory Committees, Gateway to Industry School Partnerships, the Industry Advisers and other programs promoting engagement by young people are well directed towards responding to the needs of R3Q communities. What is suggested below is that taking the three concepts of: *Social infrastructure*, *Educational infrastructure* and *Administrative infrastructure* that considerations for how these kind of efforts and approaches might be augmented and advanced further are worthy of consideration by the Committee.

Social infrastructure

Efforts directed to further strengthen, support and sustain social partnerships, links amongst educational institutions, local enterprises and workplaces and communities at a regional level are key priorities. Included here are identifying how these social partnerships can come to inform, support and enact effective vocational education and training provisions as directed towards meeting their needs more fully and comprehensively.

Central here is building up effective practices associated with collaborations that will make such arrangements normative and orthodox, and championing the processes and benefits of such arrangements and practices across R3Q communities, may well lead to more effective outcomes.

Identifying potentials and opportunities within these communities that can use VET provisions to advance further their goals and the capabilities is something that might best arise from localised social infrastructure, albeit organised administratively on a regional level. This includes, actively identifying and seeking ways to innovate, develop innovative practices and outcomes within private and public sector enterprises, and the community is more generally.

Educational infrastructure

Further enhancing the level and extent of educational leadership and ability at the regional level is a key priority to achieve effective provisions for R3Q communities. These are important to inform, advise, support and lead the enactment of educational processes that are both responsive to localised needs, and also advance new opportunities, opening up prospects for innovation and supporting them.

Further developing that ability includes providing leadership for and building practitioner competence at both the educational institutions and also within public and private sector enterprises within these communities will assist their ability to be both responsive to existing need and innovative in advancing the potential and capacities of those communities. In concrete terms this means having experienced and qualified educators who have the capacity to appraise local need and translate that into effective educative experiences. These experiences should not be limited to only those that can be provided through structured PET programs, but other kinds of experiences such as those, for instance in workplaces in those communities, as well as bridging arrangements in community settings or facilities that allow individuals to engage in educational experiences. There are good examples in Victoria from community centres which serve these kinds of goals in regional and rural communities.

Developing this capacity might best arise through structured experiences by DESBT to promote leadership qualities and practitioner competence, but also selective appointments at the regional level to promote and realise those outcomes.

Considerations for specific initiatives such as industry sector specialised centres of excellence located in these communities and having qualified and experienced vocational educators who can provide educational leadership in them is likely to be important.

So, considerations here are about securing and developing further the level of educational expertise and leadership, the ability to tailor and adapt, even modify, educational programs and tailor the educational processes to meeting the needs of individuals within these communities and the private public sector enterprises that both will employ these individuals and also benefit from their capacities. Importantly, the learning outcomes here should not be restricted to merely replicating what is currently required but, also seeking to extend an advance the capacities of individuals, thereby the enterprises that might employ them and collectively the social and economic fortunes of these communities.

#### Administrative infrastructure

Central to the success of the social and educational infrastructure is that of the arrangements and support, which includes a greater accentuation of decision-making, fitting the processes of administration to the needs of communities, including supporting partnerships and the resourcing and staffing of VET provision. In addition, support for regional information and engagement with enterprises, and building partnerships at the regional level becomes important.

Added here, are intentional processes for innovation and identifying opportunities and potential for advancing the social and economic capacities of those communities.

DESBT has an existing regional structure, is progressing with Regional Advisory Committees, has designated Industry Advisors and is supporting and championing partnership arrangements such as the Gateway to Industry School Partnerships and 'Grow your own' initiatives to build greater capacity at the local level. All these are well-directed and focussed initiatives that are likely to benefit by be strengthened, more widely adopted and enacted, and with the focus at the regional level:

- Facilitating the engagement of industries with VET provisions nationally, at the state and local level to ensure their needs are addressed through both publicly and privately provided provisions
- Facilitating industry sectors' influence on the content, form provision of experiences comprising VET in ways commensurate with the goals and its contributions
- Great potential of social/educational/institutional infrastructures to support engagement

Such initiatives need to be driven by performance indicators that are aligned with the goals of achieving these outcomes for R3Q communities. Measures of responsiveness and innovation might be gauged from the community, frequency of visits, dissented decision-making, localise presence of Industry Advisers and the frequency by which decisions can be made locally based and some examples of those performance indicators.

### Alignment with national reform processes

The vocational education system in Australia has developed into one that relies upon national guidance, structures and consultations to overcome unnecessary and unhelpful the Haitians in curriculum descriptions and certification. In some ways, these are the great strengths of the Australian vocational education system. However, it is important that the quest for national consistency does not override important goals associated with being responsive at the local level and advancing local potential. Consequently, a mature relationship between national aspirations and structures and realising the needs and aspirations of R3Q communities. Currently, the federal government is advancing a series of reforms for the national provision of vocational education, with both goals to be achieved by 2024 and also processes and reforms that are ongoing. In the tables below, how what is proposed in this submission is aligned with those reform goals is set out. Table 3 responds to the current focus on reforms leading up to 2024 and Table 4 addresses the intended reforms that are ongoing.

Table 3 – alignments between current reforms and what is proposed here

Plans for 2022 – 2024	Note
Improving access to and support for foundational skills	Yes – often foundational skills need to be developed in context and with relevant examples and understanding and responding to students’ readiness. This can only be undertaken locally
Supporting micro credentialling in the training system	Yes – localised responsive assessment is likely to be helpful in promoting validity and reliability for Michael cadet
Harmonising and modernising apprenticeship, to boost completion rates, support businesses and enhance labour mobility	Yes – if these plans are premised upon building partnerships with local enterprises, hiding support for effective learning experiences and engaging young people in ways that they complete their apprenticeships
Improving VET delivered to secondary school students	Yes – if these arrangements are supported through effective local social partnerships and provision of relevant experiences.
Promoting the National Careers Institute as the national front door to career services	Yes - if national descriptions of occupations and advice can be tailored or local communities and informed in ways that are relevant to young people and their parents/carers.
Improving VET data collection, analysis and use	Yes – gathering data at the local level of what constitutes effective vet practice, approaches to teaching and engagement in social partnerships is sorely needed to inform national prescriptions
Increasing investment under a new funding model	Yes – that investment needs to be directed to building educational and administrative infrastructure at the local level.

Table 4 – alignments between ongoing reforms and what is proposed here

Ongoing	Note
Simplified and streamlined VET qualifications which are responsive to current and future needs	Yes – if streamlining refers to making them responsive to both national prescriptions and latitude at the local level to be responsive to existing and future needs.
Building the skills of the workforce through high quality and relevant training, with more opportunities for Australians	Yes – exactly, this is what these suggestions are directed towards improving the quality of VET the local level and making it more responsive to local needs and accessibility and heightening the relevance of the content and its teaching stop
Career information is streamlined and empowers inform decision-making	Yes – if streamlining refers to meeting responsive to informing and engaging young people and their parents/carers at the local level.
Improve transparency and accountability – learners, employers and industry are all supported to easily navigate a fair and transparent VET system	Yes – the suggestions for enhanced administrative infrastructure at the regional level is directed towards assisting transparency and responsiveness at the local level, and importantly, engaging local social partners.
National consistency for learners, employers and industry across course cost and quality, skill needs, subsidies and loans	Yes, but only if consistency is about these administrative arrangements, not being extended to make the content and teaching nationally consistent which conflicts with localised needs and requirements.

In sum, what can be seen here is a consideration of a structured approach to decentre decision-making, provision of advice and bodes of enactment, to develop the capacities for these to occur within rural, remote and regional communities. In addition, strong focus is on developing further the capacities to realise these outcomes for R3Q communities and in ways that allow them to identify and respond to current need and also to advance the goals and activities within those communities to optimise their potentials both socially and economically.

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## Appendix One: Studies informing the contributions proposed here

The investigations informing the contributions to this submission include:

- policy work undertaken across Queensland enterprises during the microeconomic reforms in the early 1990s;
- curriculum development for BHP coal in Central Queensland (1993-5);
- an 18 month long study of a major Central Queensland enterprise's training needs and processes (1993–5);
- a national project examining the 'demand side' of VET in regional, rural and remote communities (1998);
- a two-year long study of a large country Victorian food-processing enterprise's educational and training needs (2000-1);
- evaluating the Local Learning Employment Networks for the Victorian government (2002-3);
- a national project on how social partnerships can support local provisions of VET (2003 -06);
- a national project of continuing education and training (2012-2014);
- a QLD project on enhancing the standing of VET (2017-2018);
- two recent projects of medical-healthcare provisions and training in regional/rural QLD (2020 – 2022);
- and a recent on attracting, preparing and retaining allied healthcare workers in QLD
- a current project on social partnerships and engagements to inform post-school pathways and (2022 – ongoing).