

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

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## **QUT Digital Media Research Centre submission to Inquiry Into The Delivery Of VET In Regional, Rural And Remote Queensland**

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### **Overview**

Dr Kim Osman and Dr Amber Marshall are researchers in the Digital Media Research Centre (DMRC) at the Queensland University of Technology. The DMRC is a global leader in digital humanities and social science research with a focus on communication, media, and the law. Our Digital Inclusion and Participation program actively works with government, industry, non-profit and for-purpose organisations to undertake a range of research on digital inclusion throughout Australia.

We welcome the opportunity to provide our views on the delivery of VET in regional, rural and remote Queensland. We have extensive experience and expertise in understanding people's pathways to training and employment through the use of digital connections and technologies. Our research regularly engages stakeholders in Queensland's VET and broader education sector and past, present, and future VET sector end users.

Recent research projects related to regional, rural and remote digital inclusion and VET education/training pathways include:

- [Advancing Digital Inclusion in low income Australia families](#)
- [Northern Australia Communications Analysis](#)
- [A Study into Digital Inclusion and Human Factors of AgTech Adoption on Queensland farms](#)

Based on evidence from this and other research, we submit the following considerations for parts 2 and 3 of the Inquiry.

## **Part 2. Major barriers to the provision of localised and place-based VET, and priority areas and cohorts in Queensland**

- Stable, affordable internet connections in homes are necessary for supporting VET students in regional and remote areas of Queensland.
  - Many low-income families (who often have intersecting barriers to digital inclusion such as disability and living regionally or remotely) experience data poverty and rely on expensive mobile data to access the internet ([Dezuanni, et al. 2022](#)).
- Enrolling in courses and accessing VET often requires existing digital literacies that may prevent some people from digitally excluded cohorts from undertaking VET, even if there are minimal digital components in the course itself.
  - Being a student in 2023 requires digital capabilities to access and use VET provider learning management platforms for course enrollment, course management, content, assessment and any other number of tasks that cannot be completed in-person or in a classroom. This is particularly the case in regional areas where students may travel for in-person training, and also engage in online learning remotely (flexible delivery).
- Embedding digital skills and capabilities across all subject areas should be a priority area for future VET courses so that students are job-ready to work in the digital economy.
  - Digital literacies and skills are essential for a future-focused workforce that contributes to the economic, social and cultural growth of regional and remote Queensland.

## **3. Existing programs that might assist in reducing barriers or supporting priority cohorts in accessing localised and place-based VET**

The following existing initiatives could support digitally excluded cohorts to access localised and place-based VET in Queensland:

- [Regional Connectivity Program](#)
- [nbn™ Digital Capability Tool](#)
- Local libraries and Indigenous Knowledge Centres (IKCs): Libraries and IKCs throughout Queensland offer a variety of place-based and locally contextualised digital literacy training and help, from individual tech sessions, to classes focused on developing particular capabilities.
- [Be Connected](#) provides a suite of resources aimed at improving the digital skills and literacies of excluded cohorts.
- [ACCAN](#) offers a variety of consumer resources including a 'hardship portal' for people experiencing financial difficulties related to affordability.
- Telstra offers [concession plans](#) to eligible customers.