

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

Submission No: 21
Submitted by: Pharmacy Guild of Australia - Queensland Branch
Publication:
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:
Submitter Recommendations:



Committee Secretary
Education, Employment and Training Committee
Parliament House
George Street
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*Submitted on behalf of The Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Queensland Branch
via online submission form*

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia, Queensland Branch (The Guild) welcomes the inquiry into the delivery of VET in regional, rural and remote Queensland and supports the improvement of training delivery in these regions to ensure a qualified and work ready community pharmacy workforce.

The Guild represents 870 community pharmacies (73.5%) in the state of Queensland and is a Nationally Recognised Training Organisation (RTO 0452). The average number of visits to a community pharmacy by people aged 65 years and older is 21¹ in a 12-month period. Community pharmacies and their staff play a key role in the provision of healthcare to the local community and an appropriately trained and qualified workforce is necessary to improve patient health outcomes.

Please see below responses to the specific examination points of the inquiry.

ToR 2: The major barriers to the provision of localised and place-based VET, and priority areas and cohorts in Queensland

The Queensland Government's commitment to supporting regions to 'grow their own' workforce is ideal and should be supported by adequate funding and collaboration. This will ensure local people have local jobs and that they are supporting the local community.

The Guild's RTO arm currently delivers in any location in Queensland via a distance education model, supported by employers across regional, rural and remote Queensland. Students that are enrolled in a qualification with The Guild must be employed in a community pharmacy. This ensures that access to work-based assessment, resources and experience is met and translates to increased completions. New employees are often enrolled in a VET program shortly after their commencement, which means the workforce is being skilled, leading to better retention rates.

Without this model, The Guild would not be able to deliver VET in regional, rural and remote Queensland due to small class sizes which increase costs and make delivery not sustainable. The impact on employers to 'release' a student to attend regular face to face training days renders this type of training delivery not feasible. In addition, students (or employers) would need to fund travel to the training location as our students are geographically distant.

¹Australia: average number of visits to a pharmacy by age 2021 | Statista



There is an increased cost of getting qualified trainers and assessors to regional, rural and remote Queensland and there are no locally based trainer and assessors in the community pharmacy industry. This increased cost isn't recognised in current funding arrangements.

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

Skilling Queenslanders for Work

A successful existing program The Guild has been involved with for numerous years is the Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) program. Under this model, The Guild's community-based arm and RTO arm work closely together to provide additional wrap around support to disadvantaged and unemployed Queenslanders while they complete SIR20116 Certificate II in Community Pharmacy.

The Guild's position as a strong employer network positively impacts the delivery of this program, with high employment rates at the conclusion of each intake, exceeding the program set employment KPI.

Recently, The Guild's delivery of SQW outside of Major Cities of Australia (as indicated on Remoteness Area 2016 Map) has resulted in the following employment outcomes:

- Darling Downs 71%
- North Queensland 78%
- Central Queensland 100%

The strong focus on equity groups plus the place-based approach to delivery makes SQW an ideal program to reduce barriers and support priority cohorts.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy Assistant Traineeship Scheme

Funded as part of the 7^h Community Pharmacy Agreement, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy Assistant Traineeship Scheme² aims to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the pharmacy workforce to assist pharmacies to better meet the needs of their local communities. The scheme provides allowance payments to eligible pharmacies that employ and support Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy Assistants to complete a nationally accredited pharmacy assistant training course.

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

Support to deliver in regional, rural and remote locations

Support for RTOs, in the form of additional funding for flights, accommodation and transport, would allow "intensive" delivery days where the trainer and/or assessor could be present in the workplace or in a simulated workplace (in the case of regional delivery where more students are enrolled in VET). One day every so often (i.e., monthly, or quarterly) would be

² [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pharmacy Assistant Traineeship Scheme - Pharmacy Programs Administrator \(ppaonline.com.au\)](http://ppaonline.com.au)



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viable for employers to 'release' employees in VET and this would benefit students to reinforce the knowledge or skills gained by distance education.

Even partial subsidies in this area would allow metropolitan based RTOs to better service and support students in regional, rural and remote Queensland where place-based VET is not available.

DESBT regional offices

The Guild has delivered our SQW program, *Fundamentals of Community Pharmacy*, across Queensland and has engaged with SQW staff in all regions. The Guild has had varying experiences with the SQW team in each region, specifically around the support, guidance and advice received. A consistent approach across regions may improve provider experience, lead to better outcomes for SQW projects and encourage providers to deliver in all regions.

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