

Towards a more localised and inclusive assessment of need, and enactment and evaluation of vocational education and training for regional, rural and remote communities

A briefing for the Employment, Education and Training Committee of
Queensland parliament

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The observations and conclusions advanced here are drawn from engagements and findings of a series of research projects, including:

- 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 current projects of medical-healthcare provisions and training in regional/rural QLD (2020 – ongoing); and
- two current projects on social partnerships and engagements to inform post-school pathways and attracting, preparing and retaining allied healthcare workers in QLD (2022 – ongoing).

Key points

- Regional, rural and remote communities have distinct needs for provisions of VET in both their focuses and educational processes.
- Characteristics of rural and remote communities and needs for/of VET have distinctive strengths and limitations.
- Need for localised and inclusive assessment of need, enactment and evaluation of VET provisions (e.g. IEF).
- Considerations of how localised governance and development arrangements for VET might progress (e.g. RJC's, ISAs).
- Evaluating the potential role of 'anchor institutions' and place-based/sensitive VET provisions.
- Championing the occupations served by VET



Distinct needs of regional, rural and remote communities

Distinct kinds of enterprises and industry sectors

Particular kinds of industries

Enterprises with unique operations requirements

May sit outside of existing VET provisions

Distinctive forms of work and work requirements

Scale and scope of workplace and occupational practices distinct

Specific requirements of enterprise

Distinct requirements of occupational competence (i.e. routine/non-routine problems-solving)

Distinctive community requirements

Community needs beyond specific course focuses

Demands of local community

Characteristics of rural and remote communities and VET

Relative strengths

Engagement - often facilitate a higher level of engagement in collaborations than in metropolitan communities, because actors are close, known and built around shared issues

Work activities often engage local communities (e.g. agriculture, mining, secondary processing)

Partnerships - partnerships that initiate, and support VET provisions are seemingly often locally initiated and enacted through localised imperatives and engagement, - local needs are obvious and observable.

Local visibility - key institutions and workplaces are highly visible and stand to be key anchor institutions around which activities associated with vocational education can progress.

Relative limitations

Range of opportunities and forms of support - these communities may lack the range of opportunities and forms of support that means the kinds of offerings of tertiary education might be less accessible, obvious and present

Kinds of work activities may not provide models, opportunities for learning

Limits of specialisation - the availability of specialisation training or specialisms may also be limited and not accessible locally and some forms of expertise only available at a distance or remotely.

Low state visibility - the needs of these communities may experience low visibility because they are often not obvious or observable by communities in metropolitan centres (e.g. Gladstone, Peak Downs).

Need for more localised assessment of need and enactment of VET provision

Industry Engagement Framework – a helpful and positive step

Widen and strengthen the roles and scope of Regional Job Committees

More than enacting what is decided centrally, need to actively inform policy and practices, including re-formulating national VET provisions.

Place-based and sensitive responses are required - Engage locally to understand and respond to needs.

Industry Skills Advisors – structured engagement with regional communities and RJC's, workplaces

Inform and empower localised shaping of VET provisions within but not constrained by national/state frameworks (National industry VET prescriptions), including VET educators.

Championing the occupations VET serves by government and sector organisations

Greater focus of place-based responses – workplace and community-based

Need for more localised assessment of need and enactment of VET provision

A more structured approach is probably required to order, enact and evaluate the needs of regional, rural and remote communities. Some of the questions to be addressed by such an evaluation might include:

- *What are the effective alignments between national training packages and existing VET provisions, and enterprise needs in regional, rural and remote communities?*
- *What constitutes both the broad and specific goals for VET in these communities, and how they are currently being met?*
- *How might those alignments and those needs be more effectively realised?*
- *What kinds of social partnerships and anchor institutions are most likely to provide leadership in enhancing the requirements for and provision of VET in those communities?*
- *What kinds of place-based and place-sensitive VET provisions should be emphasised in these arrangements?*
- *How can combinations of VET institutional and workplace-based provisions of VET be organised to meet the needs of regional, rural and remote Queensland communities?*