



Mr Will Denny
Senior Policy and Project Officer
Further Education and Pathways
Department for Education
GPO Box 1152
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Via Email: Education.VETPathways@sa.gov.au

Dear Mr Denny,

FEEDBACK SUBMISSION: A REVIEW OF VET FOR SCHOOL STUDENTS

I refer to the VET Issues Paper: *Vocational Pathways to Employment. A Review of VET for School Students*, released by the Minister for Education in June 2019, and the request for stakeholder feedback.

The Motor Trade Association of South Australia (MTA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the questions raised in the issues paper, and contribute to the development of a VET for Schools Policy.

The MTA is the only employer organisation representing the interests of the automotive retail, service and repair businesses in the state. The MTA also operates a Training and Employment Centre comprised of both a Registered Training Organisation and Group Training Organisation. It is the industry's automotive training provider of choice and is the largest employer of automotive apprentices in South Australia.

The MTA provides the following feedback on the key challenges identified, and the questions raised, in the issues paper:

PERCEPTION

1. What more needs to be done to increase awareness and change perceptions about VET and vocational careers?

An education and awareness campaign should be developed that highlights the advantages of vocational pathways, targeting school students as well as their families, particularly parents or caregivers. Parents can play an influential role in a student's choice of career path and related subject choices.

Parents should be educated in the value of VET pathways, dispelling the current perception that it is an option targeted towards students that are at risk of disengaging from school. VET pathways need to be rebranded as an option for all students to pursue a productive, fulfilling career, in much the same way as a university education is encouraged. This should include raising awareness about the range of employment opportunities available, earning potential and wellbeing outcomes.

Alongside this, industry facilitators and VET pathway guides should be actively promoted in schools to provide students with an opportunity to engage with individuals who have real industry experience. Such facilitators and guides would differ from school based VET coordinators by having specific experience in the relevant industry at the workshop level, and thus be better placed to assist students to begin vocational pathways and provide ongoing support.

2. How can we ensure vocational pathways are presented as a credible option to students and families?

Education materials should be developed that emphasise the value and importance of secondary school VET in attracting young people to vocational careers and assisting students to be 'job ready'. The Education Department needs to actively dispel the idea that VET pathways are a last resort, aimed only at keeping students in school and completing Year 12. For example, the promotion of data such as that outlined in the issues paper that identifies that many VET graduates have the capacity to earn more than Bachelor degree graduates over the course of their careers, would undoubtedly cause students and families to consider a VET pathway.

These materials should be delivered by industry facilitators, VET pathway guides or skilled VET coordinators who have relevant experience and exposure to specific trades in demand. This includes the promotion of success stories from similarly aged people in the industry.

Re-education also needs to happen at a school level. There appears to be significant resistance by schools to change the focus of student progression to post-secondary outcomes away from university study which may be causing reputational risk to VET courses, and may be impacting VET commencements.

This is due to university placements being measured more transparently and with the pathway to university understood more clearly by all stakeholders than is the case with VET. In addition, schools are recognised for achieving greater university placements, but equivalent recognition for achieving VET outcomes does not occur in the same way, if at all. Work needs to be done to highlight and celebrate the achievements of students who undertake a VET pathway, in the same way schools celebrate SACE results.

In addition, industry associations (such as the MTA) and their affiliated training bodies should be further integrated into the secondary school system to provide advice and knowledge on employment and VET pathways. Such associations would also be well placed to provide expert contributions into the trade training curriculum delivered in schools and development of new approaches, including the opportunity for industry taster courses delivered via industry placements or facilitated through RTOs.

ACCESS

3. What examples of barriers to access VET courses exist within our education system and how might they be overcome?

In the MTA's experience, typical barriers to accessing VET courses in secondary schools is a lack of knowledge regarding VET pathways by students, staff and even VET coordinators;

perceptions of VET courses as being less desirable than other study options; and inadequate infrastructure in place within schools to support the appropriate delivery of current industry skills training.

To overcome this, secondary schools wishing to access funding for VET courses should have a pre-requisite requirement to enter into a genuine partnership agreement with relevant industry associations and their affiliated training bodies, to coordinate funding applications that demonstrate consideration of infrastructure, equipment, training auspicing arrangements, and service delivery including skills training and employment pathway guidance services, as well as employment outcomes facilitation.

4. What can be done to ensure schools are well placed to access and use available funding?

The MTA reiterates its view that secondary schools wishing to access funding should have a pre-requisite requirement to enter into a genuine partnership agreement with relevant industry associations and their affiliated training bodies, to coordinate funding applications that demonstrate consideration of infrastructure, equipment, training auspicing arrangements, and service delivery including skills training and employment pathway guidance services, as well as employment outcomes facilitation.

5. What models exist to provide flexibility in schools to support students to access VET?

The most advantageous model the MTA is aware of is a 'hub and spoke' type system whereby a central school is fed by surrounding schools, or schools with similar objectives in terms of VET, to form a centre of excellence. This model is currently best demonstrated by Urrbrae or Underdale High Schools.

6. What more can be done to promote access and equity for disadvantaged cohorts?

A school model that combines VET with SACE should be developed to create a pathway for training and learning that provides the additional and specific support structure necessary for disadvantaged cohorts to access vocational pathways on an equitable basis.

In considering such a model, I reiterate the MTA's view that schools wishing to access funding should have a pre-requisite requirement to enter into a genuine partnership agreement with relevant industry associations and their affiliated training bodies, to coordinate funding applications that demonstrate consideration of infrastructure, equipment, training auspicing arrangements, and service delivery including skills training and employment pathway guidance services, as well as employment outcomes facilitation.

QUALITY

7. What arrangements need to be put in place to assure consistent levels of quality?

The introduction of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) or an audit program across school VET programs that record or assess quality levels in regards to hand skills and tool knowledge,

foundational skills including language, literacy and numeracy, transition from VET to industry employment outcomes, as well as the industry currency of service providers, would in the MTA's view provide a level of confidence in the quality of the VET system in schools. Such arrangements should also be underpinned by a culture of transparency.

8. How do we build industry and employer confidence in VET for school students?

In addition to the aforementioned KPIs or audit program and an underpinning culture of transparency, industry and employer confidence in the delivery of VET programs in schools would be best achieved through the engagement of industry associations and their affiliated RTOs, as well as direct engagement with industry. Engaging directly with industry, industry associations and their training organisations in the development of school based VET programs would create industry and employer confidence in industry currency, pathways guidance, curriculum development and validation, and training delivery.

9. What is the best mechanism to deliver quality VET for school students?

As outlined above, schools wishing to access funding to deliver VET programs should have a pre-requisite requirement to enter into a genuine partnership agreement with relevant industry associations and their affiliated training bodies, to coordinate funding applications that demonstrate consideration of infrastructure, equipment, training auspicing arrangements, and service delivery including skills training and employment pathway guidance services, as well as employment outcomes facilitation.

In addition, industry associations (such as the MTA) and their affiliated training bodies should be further integrated into the secondary school system to provide advice and knowledge on employment and VET pathways. Such associations would also be well placed to provide expert contributions into the trade training curriculum delivered in schools and development of new approaches, including the opportunity for industry taster courses delivered via industry placements or facilitated through RTOs.

10. How can employers and industry contribute to the quality of VET for school students?

The introduction of KPIs or an audit program of VET programs in schools, previously considered above, that record quality levels in regards to hand skills and tool knowledge, foundational skills including language, literacy and numeracy, transition from VET to industry employment outcomes, as well as the industry currency of service providers, would help to contribute to the quality of the VET system in schools.

Engaging directly with industry associations and their affiliated RTOs, as well as direct engagement with industry, in the development of school based VET programs, including industry currency, pathways guidance, curriculum development and validation, and training delivery, will also contribute to the quality of the VET system in schools and ensure its relevance.

RELEVANCE

11. To what extent should students' pathways to earning or learning be made more flexible?

School based apprenticeships are a solid foundation for flexible approaches but need to be reformed so as to allow sustained work placements for weeks at a time rather than piecemeal work placements of one day a week or fortnight.

Following the move of Year 7 to public high schools from 2022, this could be supported by a dedicated VET curriculum in years 7 to 10 that focuses on trade required skill sets rather than academic skill sets which are then transferred, or attempted to be transferred, to VET pathways in years 11 and 12.

12. What more can be done to ensure school enrolled VET students are work-ready?

Students in dedicated VET pathways must meet the minimum standards regarding language, literacy and numeracy necessary to enter a VET course as a precondition to being able to leave secondary school and apply for a full time apprenticeship.

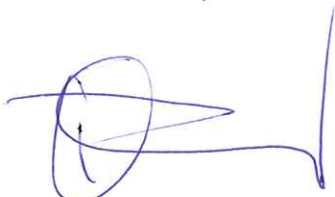
13. What arrangements can be put in place to build closer relationships between school and industry?

Industry associations and their affiliated training bodies should be further integrated into the secondary school system to provide advice and knowledge on employment and VET pathways as well as expert contributions into the trade training curriculum delivered in schools and development of new approaches, including the opportunity for industry taster courses delivered via industry placements or facilitated through RTOs.

The MTA appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the issues paper, and would welcome the opportunity to be further involved in the development of the VET for Schools Policy.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this submission further please contact: Natarsha Tregloan, Policy Officer : ntregloan@mtaofsa.com.au, or 08 8291 2000

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'P' and 'U' followed by a horizontal line.

Paul Unerkov
Chief Executive Officer

24 July 2019