

TRAINING REPORT

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It is with great pleasure I present my third report as leader of the Federal Training Portfolio.

While not a high volume of Motions were presented at Federal Conference 2017, the Portfolio remained firmly committed to ensuring students who choose traineeships or apprenticeships, have equitable opportunity to access tertiary training. The number of motions is not necessarily reflective of the difficulties this cohort faces in accessing tertiary education.

Financial assistance for students who relocate to complete compulsory work experience remains a high priority lobby.

The Government has reiterated commitment to maintaining a high-quality Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector and growing the number of apprenticeships in Australia. Once again, steps have been taken to promote the VET sector in the Australian community as a real and positive choice for Australians with around \$3 billion committed towards the VET sector in 2018-2019.

The release of *Apprentices and trainees 2017: December quarter* shows that at the end of last year there were 256 140 apprentices and trainees in-training across Australia. (Source: Assistant Minister Andrews Press Release 5 June 2018) www.ncver.edu.au/publications

The Skilling Australians Fund, (SAF) is a major commitment between the Government and states and territories working together to create an additional 300 000 apprenticeships throughout Australia. The Skilling Australians Fund is a \$1.5 billion commitment from 2017 - 2022 with traineeships and apprenticeships in rural and remote areas amongst the priority projects, ensuring the needs of rural and regional Australia are met. "The Government is making sure the needs of rural and regional Australia are addressed." (Source Assistant Minister Andrews. Joint doorstep 30 May 2018) States and territories signing onto the new SAF National Partnership Agreement will also meet the Government's commitment dollar for dollar.

The Government's Revised National Standards for Group Training Organisations (GTO) introduced in 2017, ensures apprentices, trainees and host employers receive consistent, quality support from GTOs Australia-wide.

The Government's VET Student Loans (VSL) program which replaced the VET FEE-HELP program has shown early promising results. Since July 2017 only fully-approved providers are allowed to offer VET Student Loans with the Government introducing student progression measures and the VET Student Loans Ombudsman. The three loan caps for 2018 have increased in line with CPI to \$5 075, \$10 150 or \$15 225 with the Government monitoring the program to ensure it continues to meet the needs of students and industry.

The list of VSL eligible courses are updated in line with requirements: they must be current, on at least two state or territory skills lists, or are science, technology, engineering or mathematics related or are tied to a licenced occupation requirement. Follow the link to access VSL eligible courses.

[https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/20180604 -
vsl approved course providers list.pdf](https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/20180604-_vsl_approved_course_providers_list.pdf)

Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships which include vocational education students undertaking STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) studies including agricultural and health fields commenced with the first round of scholarships up to a value of \$18 000 allocated in 2018. The 2019 round of scholarships will be advertised towards the end of 2018.

Youth Allowance. Apprentices and trainees may be eligible to claim Youth Allowance for Australian Apprentices provided they meet the criteria which includes proving they are registered with the Australian Apprenticeship scheme, enrolled in a full-time apprenticeship or traineeship and are aged between aged 16 – 24. Australian Apprentices, providing they meet eligible criteria, may be able to claim Austudy if aged 25 and over or ABSTUDY if Indigenous Australians. Please do not self-assess. Further information can be found at:

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/payments-and-services-australian-apprentices>

“Regional kids deserve the same opportunities as kids in the cities”. (Source Hon Michael McCormack joint doorstep 30 May 2018)

VET Review

In June 2017 The Hon Karen Andrews MP, Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills announced a major review of the framework which governs the regulation of Australia’s VET sector.

The report from this Review was released on Friday 15 June. The Australian Government will progress 10 recommendations and support in-principle a further 11 recommendations.

Grouped into 5 key areas the Australian Government has responded that they will continue to liaise with key stakeholders as they work towards implementing the review recommendations.

The 5 key themes: engagement between the regulator and the sector; strengthening registration requirements of RTOs; teaching excellence; improving the collection and the sharing of data; and information and protection for students.

The report aims to strengthen the Australian Skills Quality Authority’s (ASQA) regulatory approach and improve the quality of the VET sector.

<https://www.education.gov.au/nvetr-act-review>

https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/australian_government_response_to_the_nvetr_act_review_0.pdf

Trade Support Loans

Trade Support Loans offer loans up to \$20 420, paid in instalments, throughout the apprenticeship, to assist apprentices cover daily expenses including equipment purchases associated with completing an apprenticeship. Similar to the HECS system, the loan is repaid through the tax system once the minimum income threshold is reached. In 2017-2018 the minimum threshold is \$55 874. As an added incentive, a 20 percent discount on the loan amount is offered to apprentices who have successfully completed their apprenticeship.

Useful websites include:

- **My Skills** website provides information on training providers, courses, campus facilities and services. www.myskills.gov.au

- [Australian Apprenticeships](https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/) provides up to date information including a comprehensive FAQ section. <https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/>
- [Australian Apprenticeships Referral Phone: Line 13 38 73](https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/)
- [The Australian Apprenticeship Support Network website lists a state by state guide to some financial incentives and benefits for apprenticeships. www.apprenticeshipsupport.com.au](http://www.apprenticeshipsupport.com.au)
- <https://www.education.gov.au/skills-and-training>
- [Australian Skills Quality Authority https://www.asqa.gov.au/](https://www.asqa.gov.au/)
- <file:///C:/Users/User/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/7Y5B94BP/Full%20article.htm> the full joint doorstep interview with Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham MP, The Hon Michael McCormack MP, The Hon Karen Andrews MP and The Hon Dan Tehan MP.

The Tertiary and Training Portfolios work closely together during the year with joint teleconferences and collaboration with our Reports. Thank you to Kate Thompson and the Tertiary Portfolio.

The Portfolio looks forward to listening to members concerns in the coming year and continuing to raise the profile of these concerns to ensure this cohort has equal opportunity to follow their chosen career.

Thank you to the States who have raised issues during the year.

Thank you is also due to Wendy for her constant support and encouragement and my fellow Training Portfolio Councillors, Sally Sullivan, Kate Thompson and Suzanne Wilson for their support and advice.