

TRAINING REPORT

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All Australian students must be able to pursue courses and careers that best suit their interests and capabilities. Traineeships and apprenticeships play a vital role in many students' career path. The Government continues to invest in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) and apprenticeship sectors ensuring the sector is accessible, high quality and responsive to industry needs. Maintaining a high-quality skills and training system increases the number of available apprenticeships and traineeships with support for employers, students, job seekers, industry and the economy. There is recognition that the provision of readily accessible and affordable VET and apprenticeships in regional communities is vital in terms of sustainability and employment.

"The Liberal National Government is committed to ensuring that a Vocational education is seen as equal to a University education in terms of meeting the needs of our future workforce," Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Small and Family Business, Skills and Vocational Education.

2018 Training Conference Motions

There were two training motions at the 2018 conference. While the response from correspondence that went to the Minister for Small and Family Business, Skills and Vocational Education, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash reinforces the Government's commitment to promoting, supporting and funding VET and apprenticeship career pathways, no commitment was made to the request for an immediate increase to the Living Away from Home Allowance (LAFHA) for trainees/apprentices and an annual CPI increase or the request for apprentices to be included in the Relocation Scholarship Scheme.

VET Review Submission

In November 2018, the Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison, MP commissioned the *Expert Review of Australia's Vocational Education and Training System* to ensure Australians have the skills they need to succeed in the changing labour market, and businesses have access to the skills they need to grow their business and support economic growth. ICPA (Aust) responded to the Review including issues for rural and remote students accessing VET and apprenticeships.

<https://www.icpa.com.au/documents/download/1185/federal-submissions/vocational-education-and-training-review-january-2019.pdf> In April 2019, the final report *Strengthening Skills: Expert Review of Australia's Vocational Education and Training System* was handed to government, endorsing a six point plan: Strengthening quality assurance, speeding up qualification development, simpler funding and skills matching, better careers information, clearer secondary school pathways, and greater access for disadvantaged Australians.

"Delivering Skills for Today and Tomorrow"

Responding to the VET review, the Government has committed to supporting the VET sector including those in rural and regional areas through the Skills Package, *Delivering Skills for Today and Tomorrow*. It ensures that the VET system can deliver the skills critical to the economy now and into the future, create stronger pathways for school students into quality training, apprenticeships and jobs in areas of skills shortage, create more opportunities for young people to access, develop and gain the skills they need to succeed in Australia's modern workplace, whilst providing employers with the skilled workers they require to run their businesses. It will deliver a VET system that is responsive, respected and flexible into the future through:

- Additional Identified Skills Shortage Payment – the introduction of an Additional Identified Skills Shortage Payment, available for both employers and apprentices. Additional support is provided by a streamlined employer incentives program targeting new apprentices particularly school leavers and young people in industries experiencing national skill shortages. These payments are additional to any

payments the apprentice or employer may be eligible for under existing Australian Government programs (including Trade Support Loans, which provides income-contingent loans of up to \$21,000 for eligible apprentices to assist with everyday costs including equipment purchases. There is a bonus of a 20% discount on the amount repayable if an apprentice successfully completes their apprenticeship. The Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program provides incentives of up to \$4,000 over the life of an apprenticeship to eligible employers. The apprenticeship incentive program will also be simplified, with 31 payment categories consolidated to just 14).

- Foundational skills - New programs and additional support for youth and those with low foundational skills, will ensure they can gain the skills they need to participate in current and future workforces. This will include four pilots providing tailored services in remote communities.
- Training Hubs - Ten Training Hubs will be established across Australia to support industry pathways in areas of high youth unemployment in regional areas and local skills shortages. Hubs will be developed in partnership with industry and state and territory governments.
- National Careers Institute and Careers Ambassador - The National Careers Institute will work with industry, governments, schools, employers and tertiary providers to develop a national VET Information Strategy. This is designed to reform careers guidance for individuals across their education, training and employment, ensuring information and guidance is high-quality, stream-lined, evidence-based, and accessible by providing a one-stop-shop career portal, overseeing partnership grants and raising the profile of VET nationally. The Institute will be headed by a National Careers Ambassador.
- The Skilling Australians Fund (SAF) – The SAF is a major commitment between the Government and states and territories from 2017 – 2022, working together to create an additional 300,000 apprenticeships and traineeships throughout Australia and prioritising projects which support apprenticeship and traineeships in high demand occupations.
- Commonwealth Training Scholarships for Young Australians will be available to young Australians in regions experiencing high youth unemployment and will target occupations identified in projected growth industries and occupations identified as in demand.
- National Skills Commission and Skills Organisations - The National Skills Commission will provide consistent national leadership and be responsible for the implementation of priorities for the VET sector and oversee the reforms identified including working with states and territories to develop a national approach to the funding of VET qualifications and the identification of future skills needed to ensure the VET system addresses national labour market priorities. Skills Organisations will trial new, industry-led methods of qualification development and assessment and develop standards for industry to accredit Registered Training Organisations and ensure training meets industry needs.

RURAL AND REGIONAL ENTERPRISE SCHOLARSHIPS PROGRAM (RRESP)

The Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships Program (RRESP) is available for rural, regional and remote students commencing study at a vocational education and training institution or at a university. The scholarships are valued at up to \$18,000 depending on course length (minimum of six months full-time or up to eight years part-time) and type of study or training (on campus, or through online and distance education) and for qualifications from Certificate IV to PhD courses. A further \$500 is available to support an internship.

Visit <https://www.qtac.edu.au/scholarships/benefits> for more information. The Federal Government has expanded the Program and in April 2019, the third round of Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships opened and now includes all fields of study. Unfortunately, scholarship uptake for training students has been low.

VIRTUAL WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM ADVISORY GROUP

ICPA (Aust) has been represented on the Virtual Work Experience Program (VWEP) Advisory Group, an initiative being delivered by Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) for the Department of Education. The Virtual Work Experience Program (VWEP) is a twelve month

pilot program which aims to increase access to work experience opportunities across Australia in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related work in the virtual environment. The pilots have commenced, and the preliminary outcomes will be available for release at Federal Conference.

The Australian Apprentice Wage Subsidy Trial

The Australian Apprentice Wage Subsidy is available as an incentive for employers to engage more apprentices. The trial that commenced on 1 January 2019, continues until 30 June 2023 and will be available to employers who employ a new Australian apprentice in an occupation listed on the National Skills Needs List (NSNL) including in rural and regional workplaces. Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister for Small and Family Business, Skills and Vocational Education stated that “Through this incentive we are securing the skills our regional and rural businesses need to remain competitive and give local students new opportunities at home.” Subsidies will be provided at 75 per cent of the apprentice’s award wage in the first year, followed with 50 per cent in the second year and 25 per cent in the third year.

The Training portfolio will continue to raise the concerns of our members to ensure those who choose traineeships or apprenticeships have equal opportunity to reach their potential and follow their chosen career path.

Thank you to my fellow Training councillors, Jane O’Brien, Sally Sullivan, Kristen Coggan, Nikki Macqueen and Suzanne Wilson for their support and encouragement over this last year.