



## VET Sector Strategic Forum (VSSF)

### Joint Communiqué

#### Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA)

Chief Executive Officer, Saxon Rice  
A/g Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Fiona O'Brien

#### Adult Learning Australia

Chief Executive Officer, Jenny Macaffer

#### Community Education Australia

Board Chair, Bernadetta Mills

#### English Australia

Chief Executive Officer, Ian Aird (apology)

#### Enterprise Registered Training Organisation Association

President, Pamela Simon

#### Independent Higher Education Australia

Chief of Policy, Dr. James Hart

#### Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia

Chief Executive Officer, Felix Pirie

#### TAFE Directors Australia

Chief Executive Officer, Jenny Dodd

### Invited Attendees

#### Commonwealth Ombudsman

Senior Assistant Ombudsman, Justine Westerbeek

#### National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)

Managing Director, John King

#### Build Skills Australia – Jobs and Skills Councils (JSC)

Chief Executive Officer, Brett Schimming

ASQA held its first VSSF meeting on 10 April 2025. This Forum replaces ASQA's 'Provider Roundtable' and the meeting was chaired by ASQA's Chief Executive Officer, Saxon Rice.

The forum agreed on the Terms of Reference and discussed:

- training package design and the forward program of training package updates and reviews across all Jobs and Skills Councils
- efforts to support improved data submission to NCVER
- systemic themes in student complaints to the Commonwealth Ombudsman
- ASQA's program to support sector readiness for the implementation of the revised Standards
- updates to ASQA's service standards
- ASQA's integrity program and
- opportunities for sector stewardship by members.

## Qualification Development

JSCs are currently progressing training product reviews spanning 230 training products. Industry feedback drives these reviews to ensure training products are meeting contemporary skills needs. Members discussed the impact and cost that changes in training products can have on providers and the importance of being consulted early in training package design, with this feedback being provided to all JSCs.

ASQA and JSC CEOs have established a working group to support transition to new products and enable connection and co-ordination to minimise areas of impacts.

## Data Collection and Submission

NCVER provided insights on 'Total VET Activity' (TVA) data and the work underway to improve both data collection and provision, including through the VET Data Streamlining Program. More timely submissions of data would better support policy reform considerations and proportionate risk-based regulation, including regulatory activity to address integrity threats to the sector. NCVER acknowledged that there can be transition challenges for providers to more frequent data submission and noted the support NCVER is providing to facilitate this, including for small providers, to support the work underway to enable more regular sharing of data between NCVER and ASQA.

## Student complaints and feedback

Insights from students on their VET experience provides valuable intelligence and data to support reform considerations and improved regulation. The Commonwealth Ombudsman shared insights with members on themes coming through in complaints received, predominately from overseas students, reflected by the role the Commonwealth Ombudsman has in relation to this cohort of students. A significant percentage of complaints have centred on refund and fee disputes, with a smaller proportion focussed on cancellation of enrolment, course progress and requests to transfer to alternate providers. Complaints had also been received concerning provider closures and education agents.

## Revised Standards for RTOs

The revised Standards present an opportunity for the sector and the regulator to move from a focus on prescriptive compliance to quality outcomes that reflect flexibility, innovation and the diversity of the sector. ASQA is committed to supporting provider readiness ahead of implementation on 1 July 2025 and ongoing support, post commencement. In return, it is ASQA's expectation of providers that they review their operations holistically to self-assure against the revised Standards to identify any gaps along with opportunities for continuous improvement.

ASQA has published new draft Practice Guides and version 2 of previously released draft Practice Guides, which have incorporated feedback from stakeholders including individual providers, as well as updates

following publishing of the revised Standards. ASQA will be testing its proposed assessment approach for the revised Standards through a pilot with five diverse providers, along with transition arrangements.

The Forum discussed the range of ASQA's planned communication and engagement activities with the sector to support readiness ahead of the 1 July commencement. These include face to face and on-line information sessions, further Practice Guides, podcasts and case studies. Member organisations will also consider opportunities for deepening ASQA's reach to providers through their communication mechanisms with their members.

## Service Standards

ASQA regularly reviews its service standards alongside changes in its operating environment and has updated service standards with respect to initial registrations, registration renewals, compliance management activities and training product accreditation, to reflect the impact of significant reform and changes in the sector on ASQA's regulatory effort and activity. ASQA will communicate these updates to all stakeholders and will undertake a full review of all service standards in coming months.

## Qualifications Integrity

ASQA continues its focus on sector and qualifications integrity, including patterns of behaviour detected among non-genuine providers. Notwithstanding this focus, non-genuine providers are a small proportion of the sector, with the vast majority of providers committed to delivering quality training and assessment.

Members discussed the value of the Government's investment in the tip-off line with over half of tip-offs received since its creation leading to actionable intelligence and further opportunities for ASQA to communicate anonymity as an option to overcome reluctance of some in the sector to report egregious behaviour.

As collective stewards of the sector, members discussed the opportunity to encourage their memberships to provide ASQA with any information that will support efforts to address integrity threats to the sector. Members supported ASQA's efforts in this important program of work.

The next VSSF meeting is proposed for 29 July 2025.