



VET Sector Strategic Forum (VSSF) Communiqué

May 2026

The VSSF was convened on 21 May 2026 in a meeting chaired by ASQA's Chief Executive Officer, Saxon Rice. It brought together senior representatives from peak VET sector organisations, along with invited guests from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and the Commonwealth Ombudsman.

The meeting focused on the following shared priorities and areas of discussion:

- NCVER's reform program and work to improve data insights and reporting
- The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the VET sector, including the development of principles for responsible use and next steps for implementation
- ASQA's engagement on student wellbeing, diversity and inclusion, including work with the Antisemitism Education Taskforce and First Nations organisations
- ASQA's regulatory strategy and revised regulatory approach
- ASQA's progress towards implementation of revised cost recovery arrangements
- Recent legislative and policy measures relating to the international education sector, including the temporary suspension of certain CRICOS applications.

Update from NCVER

NCVER provided an update on its organisational renewal and its focus on delivering more timely, accessible and insight-driven data and services to the sector. This includes improvements to publications, enhancements to data tools, and a stronger emphasis on supporting stakeholders to better interpret and use data. NCVER discussed their work to improve how outcomes are measured in VET, including exploring ways to capture student success beyond qualification completion. There was strong support for this work, particularly in recognising broader outcomes such as employment, further study and other positive post-training pathways. NCVER also outlined its work to develop data tools to support risk-based regulation, with members noting the potential benefits of more timely and contextualised insights. Members also noted the importance of accessible tools and more contextualised data, including for First Nations learners and place-based analysis.

Sector use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

ASQA provided an update on the development of draft principles for the responsible use of AI in VET, informed by extensive consultation across the sector. Members noted strong support for a principles-based approach that provides guardrails while enabling innovation and welcomed the intention to align the principles with existing Standards rather than create new obligations. Members discussed the importance of practical guidance to support implementation, including case studies and examples, and highlighted the need for clarity around the scope of AI, particularly generative technologies. Issues relating to data privacy, rapid technological change and potential risks, including cultural harm,

and misuse of Indigenous cultural intellectual property were also raised. ASQA confirmed that further guidance materials will be developed and noted that this work will continue to evolve alongside sector practice.

Student wellbeing, diversity and inclusion

ASQA updated members on our engagement with the Antisemitism Education Taskforce and noted that the 2025 Standards provide a strong framework for inclusive and safe learning environments. Early insights indicate some new applicants are not yet meeting requirements relating to diversity, inclusion and student wellbeing, highlighting the need for continued support to strengthen provider capability. ASQA also updated members on its engagement with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO). This includes engagement with the First Nations Community of Practice which involved webinars and consultation with First Nations providers. Members welcomed this work and emphasised the importance of cultural capability uplift, ongoing engagement and partnerships, and increasing the number of First Nations trainers and assessors.

ASQA's regulatory strategy and revised regulatory approach

ASQA outlined progress in refining our regulatory strategy as the next step in our maturity journey since the 2020 Rapid Review. ASQA noted that this work reflects a deliberate shift from long, deep audit activity toward a broader and more continuous regulatory model using a fuller range of tools, including monitoring, education, intelligence and targeted engagement. This includes bringing together key reforms, legislative changes and a shift toward broader use of regulatory tools beyond traditional audit activity, supported by strengthened intelligence and data analytics. ASQA noted this work is being progressed alongside broader system developments, including tertiary harmonisation and the dual sector strategy, and aligns with the outcomes-focused intent of the 2025 Standards. ASQA also provided an update on our revised regulatory approach, noting upcoming publication of materials outlining key elements, including new performance assessment categories, fixed fees and 4-tiered compliance pathways. ASQA emphasised that the approach recognises providers operate at different levels of capability, intent and risk, requiring tailored and proportionate regulatory responses.

Cost Recovery

ASQA provided an update on the revised cost recovery arrangements, noting that outcomes from the consultation process were published on 13 May 2026. The consultation process attracted strong engagement from across the sector and has informed refinements to the approach, including clearer articulation of regulatory activities and associated fees. ASQA advised that further guidance will be released shortly to support implementation, including information on performance assessment categories, compliance pathways and how the revised pricing model will operate in practice. Finalisation of the fees and charges is subject to government approvals, with implementation still scheduled for 1 July 2026. ASQA noted the importance of clearly explaining how the revised regulatory approach, fixed fees and compliance pathways will operate together in practice. ASQA reiterated our commitment to ongoing engagement with the sector to support understanding and transition to the new arrangements.

Other Business

ASQA provided an update on the recent instrument signed by Assistant Minister Hill to temporarily suspend the lodgement of applications for new CRICOS registrations and for adding new courses to existing CRICOS registrations, except in limited circumstances such as training product updates. This

prompted discussion on the broader context for the measure, including the Australian Government's focus on strengthening integrity in the international education sector and responding to emerging risks. ASQA noted the continued volume of applications to enter the market and the increased scrutiny being applied through the assessment process, including lower approval rates in recent periods. Members raised questions about the policy rationale, proportionality and likely effect of the measure, including implications for cost recovery settings, sector operations and market behaviour. Members also emphasised the importance of clearly communicating ASQA's regulatory activities and outcomes, including providing examples of action taken against non-compliant providers.

Attendees

Australian Skills Quality Authority

Chief Executive Officer, Saxon Rice
Director, Policy and Education, Melinda Cox

Adult Learning Australia

Chief Executive Officer, Jenny Macaffer

Community Education Australia (CEA)

Chief Executive Officer, Russ Hawkins

English Australia

Chief Executive Officer, Ian Aird

Enterprise Registered Training Organisation Association

Executive Officer, Gabrielle Deschamps

Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia

Chief Executive Officer, Felix Pirie

National Indigenous Employment and Training Alliance

Chief Executive Officer, Kylie Penehoe

TAFE Directors Australia

Executive Director, Policy and Governance, Dr Teresa Schmidt

Invited Guests

National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Managing Director, John King

Commonwealth Ombudsman

Head of Business Support Services, Fiona Turner
Director, Industry Investigations, Hayley Marano

Apologies

Independent Higher Education Australia

Chief of Policy, Dr James Hart