

The National Quality Council

As a Committee of the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education (MCVTE), the Council plays a key role in bringing together industry, unions, governments, equity groups and providers to oversee and support the current and future quality of vocational and technical education across Australia.

Quality Council Focus

Quality Council Focus builds on information provided through the first communiqué (see http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/training_skills/policy_issues_reviews/key_issues/nts/vet/nqc.htm) that outlined activity stemming from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting of 10 February 2006 and the first NQC meeting of 31 March 2006.

From the Chair...

Moving forward we face a range of challenges in VTE including skill shortages, new technologies, continuing globalisation of industry and education, an ageing population and workforce, constant pressure for innovation, the need for higher level skills, as well as growing demand from clients for customisation and flexibility in training options.

To meet these challenges the COAG and the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education (MCVTE) have signalled a number of new national directions and priorities for vocational and technical education and its quality arrangements, which will impact on the work of the NQC.

One of the highest priorities is the development of a new quality framework for vocational and technical education that will provide "essential" standards for quality assurance of training outcomes that must be achieved by all Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). The framework will also provide RTOs with additional quality criteria that focus on continuous improvement and achievement of excellence, which can be undertaken by RTOs on a voluntary basis.

While this important work has been proceeding, it has been encouraging to witness the valuable relationships being forged between industry, RTOs, governments, equity groups and unions. I have had a recent meeting with MCVTE to provide a progress report on the 2006 NQC Work Plan, as well a meeting with the National Industry Skills Committee (NISC) Chair, Bill Stoddart.

It is rewarding to see such a high level of commitment during a crucial time in vocational and technical education in Australia. I look forward to continuing to work with all stakeholders in building a world-class National Training System.

*Stella Axarlis AM
Chair, National Quality Council*

Profile

In each edition of Quality Council Focus, one or two Members of the Council will be profiled. This edition will profile NQC Member, Megan Lilly.



Megan Lilly, NQC Council Member
Megan Lilly is Associate Director, Education & Training for the Australian Industry Group (Ai Group). Megan has responsibility for the public policy development relating to education & training of the Ai Group. Prior to this, Megan was the CEO of Business Services Training Australia - the national industry training advisory board for the business services and related industry sectors.

Megan has held several senior management positions in various Victorian TAFE institutes and was the Manager of the Australian Competency Research Centre.

Megan is currently a Director of Manufacturing Skills Australia, a Member of the National Quality Council, a Board Member of Re-engineering Australia, a Member of the National Skills Shortage Committee, and a Member of the Victorian Learning & Employment Skills Commission.

Megan holds a Bachelor of Arts, Diploma of Education, and a Masters of Educational Policy & Administration, all from Monash University.

COAG Priorities Driving the NQC Work Plan

The recent focus on the skills agenda by COAG at its meeting on 10 February 2006, has raised the profile of the training system as a key tool in meeting the skill needs of a vibrant Australian economy and reinforcing the imperative for it to be flexible and responsive. This, coupled with the Ministerial Council's earlier endorsement of the Framework for the New National Training System, has signalled new national directions and priorities for vocational and technical education and its quality arrangements through the NQC work plan.

Skill Sets and revised Statement of Attainment

Initial work carried out during 2005 in this area sought to define and describe the range of skill sets and their possible application, including as a way of publicly identifying on a Statement of Attainment, logical groupings of units of competency which meet an identified need or industry outcome. In 2006, the Council has built on the earlier scoping work, by reinforcing the importance of qualifications and by taking into account the COAG requirements to include identified skill clusters (sets) within national training packages, where there is industry demand, and develop a new look nationally portable Statement of Attainment to set out consistently and clearly for employers the competencies and skills a person has achieved.

The Council at its 30 June meeting defined skill sets where there is industry demand, as those single units or combinations of units which link to a licence or regulatory requirement, or defined industry need, while agreeing that RTOs would still be able to identify other skill sets of relevant units to meet enterprise or individual needs.

Work is currently underway to update the Training Package Development Handbook to include specific technical guidance on the identification of skills sets to meet industry demand, as well as advice on how to identify skill sets.

The NQC will also work closely with the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board (AQFAB) on Statements of Attainment and the National Training Statistics Committee on revisions to AVETMISS to accommodate the changes. The Council has also agreed to support these developments with a communication and professional development strategy to be implemented by the end of 2006.

Reframing the Future reviewed

The NQC is proceeding with a review of the Reframing the Future program as requested by the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education (MCVTE).

Reframing the Future is the national staff development and change management program designed to build a highly skilled and professional VTE workforce, capable of supporting a quality and integrated national VTE system. The review will particularly concentrate on strategic focus, management and control, and will report to the NQC at their meeting on 21 September 2006, and MCVTE at their meeting of 16 November 2006.

Stakeholders wishing to view the discussion paper to inform the review can do so by visiting <http://www.atpl.net.au/nqc/nqcnews.html>

The key outcomes envisaged from completing the review include proposals for improved national coordination, management, targeting, resourcing and evaluation/performance monitoring of professional development activities to meet the strategic priorities of the VTE system.

Strategic audit of the hospitality sector

The NQC is working with the Services Industry Skills Council to action the recommendations of the National Strategic Industry Audit of Training in the Hospitality Industry that was

undertaken during late 2005, and commission initiatives to ensure the continuous improvement of training in this sector.

National strategic industry audits seek to determine levels of compliance with relevant AQTF standards of individual RTOs across Australia, and to identify key issues impacting on training outcomes and good practice in a particular industry. They are therefore an important tool for the NQC in identifying possible systemic issues and addressing them.

The NQC Secretariat is now working with Services Skills Australia (ISC) in collaboration with state and territory stakeholders, as well as DEST, to develop and implement an action plan to follow-up on the Hospitality Industry review.

Transnational Quality Strategy

The NQC has an interest in the quality of off-shore training delivery given that it is estimated that there are over 100,000 overseas students enrolled in Australian education and training offshore. The NQC is represented on the Expert Group on Quality Assessment Trials which is tasked with designing models for trialing off-shore quality audits in the university, VTE, schools, and English language sectors, as part of the Transnational Quality Strategy

There are currently fifteen projects being undertaken by RTOs, managed by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) and these will be completed in September 2006.

New Quality Framework

Work is proceeding to meet the COAG timelines for the introduction of the new outcomes-based auditing model and standards for RTOs by 1 July 2007. The NQC has asked DEST to manage this project on its behalf and a steering committee with stakeholder representatives to oversee the work. The new quality framework will provide for registration at the essential level – a requirement for all registered training organisations – and a subsequent level, or levels that provide opportunities for RTOs to focus, on a voluntary basis, on continuous improvement and achievement of excellence.

The NQC has reiterated the importance of presenting an integrated quality framework with a set of essential standards to meet COAG requirements; the need to adequately trial and 'road-test' the framework and tools in the field; and the need to integrate "harmonised" licensing arrangements.

Further information on this initiative can be found at <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/vet/systemtas/issue1nqcnewsletter12jul06.pdf>

Employability Skills

In May 2005, the National Training Quality Council agreed to support the incorporation of employability skills into Training Packages thereby replacing the Key Competency Framework. While much has been achieved to date through the development of support tools and materials, one of the major challenges remaining relates to assessment and reporting and the absence of an agreed approach to record, report or certify employability skills. Current NQC work being undertaken by DEST is looking at a number of possible approaches that could inform future pilots.

NQC engages with Industry Skills Councils

The NQC heard presentations by the Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council and the Resources and Infrastructure Industry Skills Council at their June meeting.

These were part of regular presentations by ISCs to the NQC on particular skill needs of their industries and any issues around the development, implementation or review of Training Packages.

Advice to AQFAB on policy issues relating to VTE qualifications

The NQC is currently addressing issues emerging from the recent AQFAB Review of the AQF Guidelines for Certificates I-IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma and has assembled a project team to provide advice and recommendations on the relevance of the current AQF Guidelines given recent and emerging industry trends; the clarity and completeness of the Guidelines, including the differentiation between qualifications; the appropriate vocational/education balance in the Guidelines; and any changes considered necessary to the Guidelines. The project team will report back to the September meeting of the NQC.

NQC Planning Day

The NQC will hold a planning day on Friday 22nd September to review the progress of the 2006 Work Plan and to set directions for 2007.

NQC Website under construction

An NQC website is currently under development as part of a broader communications strategy that will engage the Council in provide timely news and updates to key stakeholders on the progress on the Work Plan, as well as outcomes and decisions taken at meetings. Stay tuned for further updates.

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ACRONYMS

- AEI** Australian Education International
- AESOC** Australian Education Systems Officials Committee
- AQF** Australian Qualifications Framework
- AQFAB** Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board
- AQTF** Australian Quality Training Framework
- AVETMISS** Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard
- COAG** Council of Australian Governments
- DEST** Department of Education, Science and Training
- ISC** Industry Skills Council
- MCVTE** Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education
- NSOC** National Senior Officials Committee
- NISC** National Industry Skills Committee
- NTIS** National Training Information Service
- NCVER** National Centre for Vocational Education Research
- NQC** National Quality Council
- MCEETYA** Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
- RTO** Registered Training Organisation