

Education and Training Reference Group update

Agenda Item 4

Purpose	To provide an update on the Ministerial Advisory Board's Education and Training Reference Group (Reference Group) meeting, held on Friday 7 February 2025.	
Presenter	Correna Haythorpe and Jodie Trembath, Reference Group Co-Chairs	
Recommendations	It is recommended that the Board:	
	1	ask any questions in relation to the Reference Group
	2	note any actions arising from the Reference Group
	3	endorse the communiqué for this item
Attachments	A. Meeting notes and outcomes - Education and Training Reference Group Meeting – Friday 7 February 2025.	

Background

1. The purpose of the Education and Training Reference Group (Reference Group) is to ensure intersection with the tertiary education sector and the performance and functions of Jobs and Skills Australia.
2. The fourth meeting of the Reference Group was held on Friday 7 February 2025.

Discussion

3. Topics discussed at the Reference Group meeting were:
 - RTO Typology
 - Tertiary Harmonisation
 - strategic member updates.

Proposed communiqué

The Advisory Board discussed the findings and actions arising from the fourth meeting of the Education and Training Reference Group, held on Friday 7 February 2025.

Education and Training Reference Group

Meeting notes and actions | Friday 7 February 2025

Attendees

Members: Correna Haythorpe (Co-Chair); Jodie Trembath (Co-Chair); Jenny Dodd; Ben Bardon; Felix Pirie; Angela Dean; Peter Hendy; Alec Webb; Pamela Simon; Sue McKay; Philip Chindamo; Russ Hawkins

Apologies: Luke Sheehy, Vicki Thomson, Peter Hendy; Jack Hargreaves

Proxies: Patrick Bailey (for Luke Sheehy); Matt Brown (for Vicki Thomson), James Hart (for Peter Hendy)

Observers: Cath Bowtell (JSA Ministerial Advisory Board Chair)

JSA attendees: Megan Lilly, Maria Shanahan, Fan Xiang, S22, S22, S22

JSA Secretariat: S22, S22, S22

Agenda item 1 – Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country and introductions

Presenter: Jodie Trembath, Reference Group Co-Chair

Dr Jodie Trembath welcomed the group and provided an Acknowledgment of Country. Ms Trembath noted that Troy Williams has been appointed as the CEO of the National Farmers Federation, and Felix Pirie will now represent ITECA.

Agenda item 2 – Standing items – procedural and administrative matters

Presenter: Correna Haythorpe, Reference Group Co-Chair

The previous minutes were endorsed, noting 4 action items remain in progress. One of those being the Strategic Review on Australian Apprenticeships Incentives System – Ben Bardon advised that he would be raising this item during the member updates.

Agenda item 3 – RTO Typology

Presenter: Fan Xiang, A/g Assistant Secretary, National Skills System and S22, A/g Director VET System Performance

Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) has developed an RTO Typology by segmenting the VET system to create groups of like RTOs. The typology is one way of looking at similarities and differences in how RTOs operate and relate to students, communities and industry. It also highlights the diversity of our VET sector.

Key stakeholders, including state and federal government organisations, as well as VET peak bodies, have been engaged at various points throughout the development of the Typology. The typology was iteratively improved after each consultation through this co-development

process. JSA released the RTO Typology Methodology paper with the final classification in May 2024. Stakeholder feedback was sought after the publication and will be considered in future Typology updates.

Applying the RTO typology JSA produced 13 factsheets at the partition level, to tell a story about the RTOs within that participation when the typology was applied. The intended audience are those who participate in VET system including students, researchers and state and territory governments. The data in the factsheets is gathered on RTO Total VET Activity and the VET National Data Asset (VNDA). JSA sought feedback from the Reference Group on the factsheets' content and whether there were any sensitivities that could arise when publishing.

While there was positive feedback from the Reference Group on the work that has gone into developing the Typology, and acknowledgement by some that the factsheets may be useful, several concerns were highlighted in relation to the factsheets. Overall concerns that data be useful, and careful consideration of the audience using the data were raised. Commentary included:

- a lack of clarity around the audience, which affects their relevance and application
- translation issues across partition types if all factsheets have the same data headings and calculation methods
- many Enterprise RTOs are exempt from submitting Total VET Activity data which raised questions regarding accuracy of data used, volunteer organisations are also not represented in Enterprise RTO data
- the currency of the data and how often it is updated
- terminology needs to be updated to be more inclusive
- for Public Providers average data is not useful to audiences due the different operational settings across providers
- potential opportunity to include profit/not for profit as a partition

JSA acknowledged these concerns and committed to review how data is presented, with careful consideration of audience. There will be further reflection on the potential audience and how they will find value in the factsheets.

Members of the Reference Group will be contacted for further feedback. Alternatively, members can submit feedback to the Secretariat before the end of February.

No changes were made to the communique.

Agenda item 4 – Tertiary Harmonisation

Presenter: Megan Lilly, Deputy Commissioner

The Deputy Commissioner summarised JSA's report on Tertiary Harmonisation and its 17 recommendations. The report is a JSA product and will be published by our Commissioner publicly in February.

The Reference Group queried the impact on recommendations that included the Australian Education Tertiary Commission, which is yet to be established.

Further queries focused on the ability to opt-out of components – such as credit transfer - and on how foundation and digital literacy skills are addressed. The Deputy Chair advised these were addressed in the report, which aims to embed flexibility and inclusivity in the framework.

The Co-Chair requested the Reference Group receive an embargoed copy of the report before publication. The Deputy Commissioner agreed to explore if that was possible but did note there would be no further opportunities for feedback.

Action 14: JSA Secretariat to investigate whether the Reference Group can receive an embargoed copy of the report prior to publication.

Agenda item 5 – Member updates

Presenter: Jodie Trembath (Co-Chair) and all members

Members were asked to provide updates on work planned or in progress in their agencies that was of relevance to JSA or each other.

Ben Bardon opened discussion on the Strategic Review of Australian Apprenticeships Incentives System. The key concern were the potential impacts to inclusive participation in the workforce and the impacts on Australia's service economy and climate critical roles if incentives continued to favour trade apprenticeships over traineeships. A suggestion was made that JSA consider these impacts in future work or convene a working group on the impact. Ms Lilly advised JSA was considering our response to the review but agreed this could be a good lens to add to our Gender Cohort Study.

Alec Webb requested an update on the International Students Pathways and Outcomes Study and advice on how JSA considers feedback from the Reference Group in general. JSA will update on the status of the study.

Member organisations advised that they are working on submissions to JSA's 2025-26 work plan.

The Co-Chair advised the members that National TAFE Day will be commemorated on 9 September at an event in Canberra.

The communique was amended to refer to the discussion on the Strategic Review of Australian Apprenticeship Incentives System.

Action 15: JSA to advise the Reference Group on the International Students Pathways and Outcomes Study

Action 16: JSA to advise the Reference Group on how feedback from the Reference Group in general is incorporated into work.

Agenda item 6 – Close of meeting

Presenter: Correna Haythorpe, Reference Group Co-Chair

The Ministerial Advisory Board Chair noted that no student representatives had attended the meeting, and quorum had not been met – although as no decisions were made this did not affect the conduct of the meeting. The Co-Chairs agreed to investigate how to re-engage the National Union of Students.

Action 17: JSA Secretariat to work with Co-Chairs to set a forward meeting schedule and distribute to members.