

Education and Training Reference Group update

Agenda Item 7

Purpose or problem statement	To provide an update and seek feedback and endorsement on the review of the Reference Group Terms of Reference, membership list and proposed approach, developed in collaboration and in consultation with the Co-Chairs of the Reference Group and Deputy Chairs of MAB.	
Presenter	Trevor Gauld, Deputy Commissioner, JSA	
Recommendations	It is recommended that the Board:	
	1	ask any questions in relation to the paper.
	2	endorse the evolution of the Education and Training Reference Group to the Education and Training Advisory Group.
	3	endorse the composition of the VET Blueprint Project Advisory Group (the Steering Committee).
	4	endorse the creation of the Terms of Reference for the VET Blueprint Project Advisory Group, incorporating the Purpose and Scope included in Attachment B .
	5	endorse the communiqué for this item.
Attachments	A. Proposed membership of Education and Training Advisory Group. B. Draft Terms of Reference for the VET Blueprint Project Advisory Group	

Background

- It was agreed at the February 2025 Ministerial Advisory Board (MAB) meeting that:
 - a review of the operation of the Education and Training Reference Group (ETRG) occur including with ETRG Co-Chairs and MAB Deputy Co-Chairs to ensure that the operating environment of the ETRG was fit-for-purpose, now that ETRG has established an operating rhythm, and
 - Deputy Commissioner Trevor Gauld work with the ETRG Co-Chairs to determine the appropriate oversight of JSA's VET Blueprint project.
- Following conversations between JSA Deputy Commissioners and both ETRG Co-Chairs this paper sets out recommendations to progress these actions and identifies a capacity to resolve both actions together through potential reforms to the ETRG.
- This paper seeks to propose a possible refocus of the ETRG following discussions to reflect a potential future structure.

Key issues

Refocussing the ETRG agenda and composition

4. On reflecting upon the operation of the ETRG to date and the importance of broad stakeholder engagement it is apparent there is an opportunity to evolve towards a more inclusive and strategic operating model. Refining the focus and composition to more directly engage with the core actors of the supply-side of the education and training system, namely:
 - Higher Education (HE) peak bodies
 - VET peak bodies
 - Students / Apprentices voices via their union representative bodies
 - HE & VET union representative bodies
 - HE & VET peak organisations representative of priority cohorts
5. Focus areas would centre around education and training system projects / products that JSA is currently undertaking or may conduct into the future or as referred by MAB, including by:
 - providing an established ongoing structure for engagement on intersecting projects / products
 - allowing for both targeted and general stakeholder consultation and engagement
 - reorienting the purpose of meetings towards a more general information sharing and stakeholder engagement frame.
6. By shifting the agenda towards the priorities, needs, and operational realities of these stakeholders, recognising their direct involvement with particular elements of the skills system, a repurposed ETRG can enhance the relevance and impact of its work, while introducing a broader stakeholder engagement and participation role.
7. This change in focus would also require a realignment of composition of the ETRG to ensure consistent and meaningful representation from across the education and training sector but also require an assurance that the broader stakeholder cohort retain a key role in providing insights and input into JSA's work.

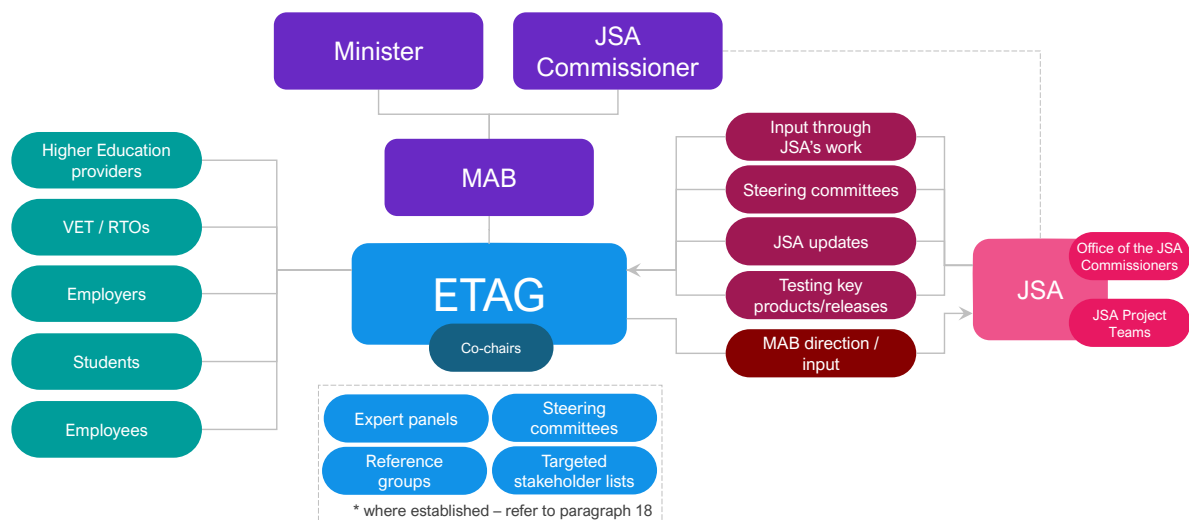
Creation of the 'Education and Training Advisory Group'

8. It is proposed that the Education and Training Reference Group evolve into a broader **Education and Training Advisory Group (ETAG)**, comprising all current members along with a potentially broader representation as outlined at Attachment A.
9. The MAB and Co-Chairs, in collaboration with JSAs Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners and JSA would allocate and drive the content for these meetings, noting the reoriented focus to general information sharing and stakeholder engagement.
10. This forum would provide an inclusive and tripartite plus platform for wider stakeholder engagement through several meetings each year, including the possibility of:
 - one face-to-face full-day workshop to coincide with another education and training event; and
 - virtual 3 – 4 hr meetings
11. ETAG would serve multiple purposes:
 - gathering broader input into JSA's work,
 - provide the ability to quickly develop and stand-up stakeholder groups to guide and test key pieces of work in a tripartite fashion where appropriate,
 - providing industry and stakeholders with regular updates on JSA's wider remit, and
 - facilitating discussions, networks, or testing key products and upcoming releases where appropriate.
12. This structure would ensure both strategic alignment and grassroots insight into ongoing work.

13. This structure could also provide for a much more open forum, with further stakeholder participation than that outlined at [Attachment A](#).
14. As indicated, an additional benefit of this model, is the creation of a 'pool' of highly engaged and motivated stakeholders who have an awareness of JSA's work which can be drawn from for specific functions related to the group's expertise, including for periodically establishing:
 - a. Steering Committees / Advisory Groups
 - b. Expert Panels
 - c. Reference Groups
 - d. Targeted Stakeholder lists
15. The above bodies would need to be initiated through clear governance lines which might include:
 - a. at the request of the MAB for example when a Steering Committee is required for a large capacity study,
 - b. via JSA teams who may want to test a product prior to its release, or
 - c. by recommendation of the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners or Executive Director.
16. Additional expertise and stakeholder groups would not be excluded where it is identified that representation beyond the ETAG membership is of value to the work being referred.

Leadership and Governance

17. It is proposed that the ETAG meetings be chaired by the current Deputy Co-Chairs of the ETAG, signalling the important leadership role these MAB members play on key education and training issues.
18. It will be important to establish governance threshold levels to provide clarity of MAB and JSA expectations of where and when different groups may be formed and a paper is currently being developed to recommend to MAB a framework / guide for this purpose.
19. The evolution of the ETRG to the ETAG would allow JSA to continue to embed Outcome 1 and 5 of the JSA work plan – **Fostering Inclusive Participation and Activating an informed dialogue**.
Convening stakeholders across the skills system, to provide the best evidence and advice, on Australia's current and future workforce and skills needs
JSA values the knowledge and experience of our tripartite partners and stakeholders in helping plan for the nation's current and future skills, labour market and workforce needs and in bringing the voices of all Australians to these important workforce and skills issues.
Additionally, JSA is committed to fostering inclusive participation in research design to ensure diverse voices are heard and incorporated across all JSA insights and advice.
20. Clarity, through redrafted Terms of Reference, on the accountability to MAB and reporting arrangements will ensure transparency is maintained while avoiding any unnecessary duplication.



Ongoing relationship with MAB

21. The ETAG would remain as a sub-function of the MAB, continuing to respond to matters referred to it by the Ministerial Advisory Board and reporting back where requested.
22. This ongoing relationship would ensure that the ETAG's work remains aligned with broader priorities and retains a clear pathway for elevating sector insights into higher-level policy forums.

Updating the Terms of Reference

23. If agreed, these proposed changes would be formalised through updated ETAG Terms of Reference to reflect the clearer focus on the key actors within the education and training system and their participation in each forum, including aligning the group's core functions more directly with initiatives such as the VET Blueprint project.
24. The updated terms would need to ensure clarity of purpose, accountability, and relevance as the group evolves to meet sector needs.

VET Blueprint Project Advisory Group

25. Following the above, and in anticipation of support for the proposed changes, it is recommended that the appropriate Advisory Group oversight of JSA's VET Blueprint project comprises eight members drawn from the proposed ETAG membership, as outlined below:
 - a. The two ETAG Deputy Co Chairs
 - b. One nominated representative of the AEU
 - c. One nominated representative of the NTEU
 - d. One nominated representative of ACTU
 - e. One nominated representative of TAFE Directors Australia
 - f. One nominated representative of Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia
 - g. One nominated representative of Community Colleges Australia
26. In addition to the current work on the VET Blueprint, DEWR have recently engaged JSA to undertake a research project linked to the VET Blueprint requested by the Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council (SWMC), to examine the rate of casual and part-time employment, particularly amongst teachers, trainers and assessors, and exploring its key characteristics, drivers and impacts.
27. This work is being performed by the same project team as VET Blueprint and is well aligned to the same Project Advisory Group, so it is proposed to attach this project accordingly.

Next steps

28. The ETRG Terms of Reference need to be modified to reflect the new ETAG if approved.
29. The JSA VET Blueprint Project Advisory Group needs to be stood up and JSA will draw on standard JSA Steering Committee Terms of Reference and incorporate Draft Purpose and Scope as outlined at **Attachment B**.
30. Additional ETAG organisations need to be contacted and invited to nominate a representative.

Proposed communiqué

The Ministerial Advisory Board discussed the review of the operation of the Education and Training Reference Group and endorsed it evolving into the Education and Training Advisory Group and remaining as a sub-function of the Ministerial Advisory Board. The Advisory Board also discussed and endorsed the Project Advisory Group for the VET Blueprint project.

Attachment A: Proposed membership of ETAG

Role	Stakeholder group	Organisation
Member	Deputy Commissioner/s	Jobs & Skills Australia
MAB Member / Co Chair	Correna Haythorpe	AEU
MAB Member / Co Chair	Jodie Trembath	Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Member	Higher Education	The Group of Eight
Member	Higher Education	Regional Universities Network (RUN)
Member	Higher Education	Universities Australia
Member	VET	TAFE Directors Australia
Member	VET	Enterprise Registered Training Organisation Association (ERTOA)
Member	VET	National Australian Apprenticeships Association
Member	VET	Community Colleges Australia
Member	VET	Independent Higher Education Australia (IHEA)
Member	VET	National Apprentice Employment Network (NAEN)
Member	VET	Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia (ITECA)
Member	Union Representative	Australian Education Union
Member	Union Representative	Apprentice Representative
Member	Union Representative	Independent Education Union
Member	Union Representative	National Union of Students
Member	Union Representative	National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU)
Member	Disability	TBC
Member	First Nations	TBC
Member	CALD	TBC

JSA VET Blueprint Project Advisory Group

Draft Purpose

The JSA VET Blueprint Project Advisory Group will draw on JSA ETAG members to serve as an advisory body to provide technical advice, strategic direction and champion the progressing the VET Blueprint National Actions under Opportunity 1: Better Understanding the VET Workforce. The Advisory Group can serve as a strategic multi-year advisor, act as a forum for stakeholder collaboration and connection, and promote and advocate for the VET Blueprint project.

Draft Scope

The VET Blueprint Project Advisory Group supports Jobs and Skills Australia in the delivery of the project.

The role of the Project Advisory Group is to provide strategic advice to JSA's VET Workforce Analysis Team to inform project development and delivery, which may include:

- advising on the strategic direction of the VET Blueprint project
- sharing subject matter expertise and insights relating to VET Blueprint Opportunity 1 of 'Building a better understanding of the VET Workforce'
- considering potential risks or unintended consequences
- ensuring alignment with project objectives
- collaboration with various stakeholders to ensure their views are well-represented including advising JSA on key stakeholders
- consideration on factors and management of potential risks that will drive successful adoption of JSA's advice in relation to:
 - a data collection strategy for a nationally consistent collection of VET Workforce Data
 - comprehensive Occupational Mapping of the VET Workforce
 - an ongoing research program model, and
 - new insights into key drivers and impacts of VET Workforce Casualisation

The Advisory Group will not:

- have any decision-making powers over the VET Blueprint project
- address government policy and program delivery of the VET Blueprint