



Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC)

Report: Vocational Education and Training in Schools

April 2016

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Executive Summary

The ongoing provision of quality education and training to rural and remote Western Australia is dependent on the Minister for Education (**Minister**) receiving sound strategic advice. The Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (**RREAC**) fulfils an important role in providing advice to the Minister from a cross-sectoral perspective and encompasses provision of education through government and non-government sectors.

With the changes in the Western Australian Certificate of Education (**WACE**) requirements, education and training has entered a new paradigm in access to, and provision of, vocational education and training (**VET**) in schools (**VETiS**). There is a greater demand on VET pathways. This paradigm can be challenging in a rural or remote context.

This report summarises the major themes, issues and concerns arising out of RREAC's discussions including:

- capability of schools to deliver vocational qualifications
- lack of access to vocational training, and
- system and process issues.

These challenges may also apply to metropolitan schools, but there is the potential for them to be more pronounced in a rural or remote context.

The report acknowledges that the State Government is aware of many of the issues and has undertaken a number of initiatives to reform VETiS, address industry concerns and improve student outcomes. However, RREAC is of the view that more needs to be done to ensure regional students have access to a range of quality VETiS options.

Within the current climate of regionalism where there is an appetite to do things differently, and with evidence of strong regional commitment, RREAC believes that there is an opportunity for enhanced cooperation and collaboration in the development, management and delivery of VETiS.

RREAC recognises intersections in the VETiS landscape between regional development, education, and training and workforce development, with differing policy and funding approaches. RREAC believes that there is scope for enhanced interdepartmental cooperation and collaboration by raising the matters outlined in this report with the relevant departments for consideration.

In order to address region-specific matters in a cohesive manner across relevant government and private sectors, RREAC favours the development of a region-specific vehicle/platform for consultation, collaboration and change for each region.

The report outlines one approach – the development of a Pilot Program. The Pilot Program would establish a Regional Steering Committee that will develop a collaborative partnership model, to look at ways that VETiS can be improved in regional areas. RREAC's observations on components of a Pilot Program are outlined in Appendix 1.

1. Background

The Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (**RREAC**) identified vocational education and training (**VET**) in schools (**VETiS**) as an area of focus for 2014. The topic was raised by RREAC Members as a focus area due to VETiS playing an increased role as career pathways for young people, the proposed changes to the Western Australian Certificate of Education (**WACE**) and the increased use of VETiS as a strategy to address industry skill shortages.

RREAC was asked to consider the following questions:

- Does living in a regional and remote location disadvantage students who wish to undergo a vocational qualification? (Access; quality)
- Does a student living in a regional and remote location have the same opportunity to undergo a vocational qualification? (Qualification choice; Funding availability)
- Most vocational qualifications require a workplace experience (either unpaid or paid through School-Based Traineeships/Apprenticeships). Does a regional student have adequate access to a workplace?
- Are there better ways to offer VETiS programs for regional and remote students? (Different delivery methods, industry/school/Registered Training Organisation (**RTO**) partnerships)

From late 2013 to April 2016, RREAC undertook a comprehensive consultation program including:

- Mr Allan Blagaich, CEO, School Curriculum and Standards Authority (**SCSA**)
- Ms Louise Morrison, Principal Consultant, Participation & VET K-12 Coordination, Statewide Services, Department of Education (**DoE**)
- Ms Juanita Healy, Director Policy and Planning, SCSA
- Goldfields Institute of Technology
- Goldfields Education Mining Industry Alliance
- Mr Les Crawley, VET Coordination Goldfields / Participation Officer Esperance
- Dr Ross Kelly, Director, Policy, Planning & Research, Department of Training & Workforce Development (**DTWD**)
- Pilbara Education Regional Office staff
- Ms Marlene Boundy, Managing Director, Pilbara Institute
- Mrs Alanna Otway, Principal, St Luke's College, Karratha
- Principal Mr Greg Kelly and Deputy Principal Ms Jennifer McMahon, Karratha Senior High School
- Students and staff from various schools in the Pilbara (in person and via videoconference)
- Funder/provider sectors through their representative members on RREAC.

In addition, RREAC Member Ms Kay Gerard obtained feedback from the industry training council network, including matters noted on the VET in Schools Qualifications Register (**VETiS Qualifications Register**).¹

¹ The VET in Schools Qualifications Register, maintained by the Department of Training and Workforce Development, provides school administrators/staff and registered training organisations with industry advice regarding the suitability of VET qualifications for delivery as part of VETiS programs. Available: <http://www.yetinfonet.dtwd.wa.gov.au/VETinschools/Pages/QualificationsRegister.aspx> [accessed 3 February 2016].

The consideration of VETiS in rural and remote areas was foreshadowed in an earlier RREAC report² where it was noted “*Industry and community partnerships play a pivotal role in instigating initiatives and leveraging programs including scholarships, mentoring, traineeships and other programs. RREAC was interested in opportunities to harness individual enthusiasm and alliances into a collective, consistent and sustained hub of support to enhance VET programs, and will explore these matters further.*”³

This report brings together RREAC’s inquiries into the area.

2. Key Issues

RREAC’s discussions held in Kalgoorlie (Goldfields region) in 2014 and Karratha (Pilbara region) in 2015 indicate that VET outcomes are deliverable with some success. For example, RREAC was briefed on the success of a school-based traineeship program in Karratha offered through an RTO and an employer (Children’s Service Support Unit). However, RREAC also noted feedback from stakeholders that there are a number of issues that keep arising with VETiS in regional areas.⁴

Issues highlighted in RREAC’s regional consultations in Kalgoorlie corresponded to those identified during RREAC’s regional discussions in the Pilbara region. These challenges may also apply to metropolitan schools, but there is the potential for them to be more pronounced in a rural or remote context. Recurring themes were -

- capability of schools to deliver vocational qualifications
- lack of access to vocational training, and
- system and process issues.

Information provided to RREAC by DoE indicates that attainment rates of VET qualifications as part of the WACE requirements in public schools in regional areas is similar to those for public schools in metropolitan areas. For example:

Table 1: Public school Year 12 achievement statistics - Vocational education and training certification

Calendar year	Location	Student Total (WACE eligible)	Number of Certs	Students with a Cert	% Students
2015	Metropolitan	9609	11039	6325	65.8%
2015	Regional	2755	3457	1790	65%
2015	Public schools	12364	14496	8115	65.6%
2014	Metropolitan	5974	6504	3630	60.8%
2014	Regional	1874	2016	1107	59.1%

² Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council, (February 2016), *Regional Report: Meetings in the Pilbara Region 26-28 October 2016*.

³ Ibid, page 11.

⁴ For example, in the Children’s Service Support Unit case referred to students undertaking a Certificate III in Children’s Services in Years 11 and 12 had a high success rate at achieving employment after school – 6/9 students. Although this program has been shown to be successful in Karratha, RREAC was informed that other schools have not replicated the programme as transport and timetabling the program has been a perceived barrier.

Calendar year	Location	Student Total (WACE eligible)	Number of Certs	Students with a Cert	% Students
2014	Public schools	7848	8520	4737	60.4%
2013	Metropolitan	9373	9153	5172	55.2%
2013	Regional	2808	2790	1507	53.7%
2013	Public schools	12181	11943	6679	54.8%
2012	Metropolitan	8836	6725	3970	44.9%
2012	Regional	2555	1897	1044	40.9%
2012	Public schools	11391	8622	5014	44.0%
2011	Metropolitan	8504	4969	3276	38.5%
2011	Regional	2513	1831	1029	40.9%
2011	Public schools	11017	6800	4305	39.1%

RREAC notes that that “attainment rates” do not reflect matters arising with regard to the VET process including the recurring themes noted above. This report examines those matters, recognising that issues may be co-dependent and interconnected.

2.1 Capability of schools to deliver vocational qualifications

Program purchase and funding

The introduction of the new WACE requirements has seen a substantial increase in VETiS activity for regional schools. There are several ways that a school can purchase VETiS programs:

- Access to subsidised institutional based training (including pre-apprenticeships) through State Public Training Providers (**TAFE**) funded by DTWD (this is capped and limited to 200 industry supported qualifications).
- Access to subsidised institutional based training delivered by TAFE and private training providers through DTWD’s Aboriginal School-Based Training Program (funding is capped and limited to specific qualifications).
- Access to DTWD’s Pre-Apprenticeships in Schools Program (funding is capped and includes \$1,300 to support work placements and is only for industry specified Pre-Apprenticeships).
- Fee for Service, in that the school pays (in many cases this is passed on to parents) an RTO to either deliver the program on site and/or for the students to visit the RTO. The lecturer is part of the RTO.
- Auspicing – where the school partners with an RTO and a teacher delivers the course. The school pays for the auspicing service.

School students can also undertake school-based apprenticeships and traineeships which DTWD funds and does not cap. It should also be noted that students are not charged a fee for DTWD VETiS programs, that is, they are fully subsidised.

RREAC was informed that DTWD only funds around 20% of VETiS enrolments. The majority of VETiS is funded by the school sector. VET funding is distributed by DoE as a targeted initiative and allocated in addition to the “per student funding” for each Year 11 and 12 student, and the school and student characteristics funding.⁵ Principals can use all these sources of funding to provide VET pathways for their students. This includes all aspects of provision, differential staffing to support offsite programs and training of teaching staff to ensure sustainability of programs or expanding the range of offerings to students. RREAC understands that the allocative mechanism used to distribute funding through the VET targeted initiative will provide that schools north of the 26th parallel will receive an additional amount per student to support increased auspicing costs in 2016 and 2017.⁶

RREAC observes that the DoE VET funding approach affords necessary flexibility for schools to respond to local conditions. However, individualised approaches may also run the risk of producing inconsistencies in policy application and in practice, even between schools in close geographical proximity.

Auspicing arrangements and teachers

For many schools the most common way to obtain a VET qualification in school is through an auspicing arrangement. Schools in the Goldfields and Pilbara regions have told RREAC that this is “the most cost effective way” of obtaining VET programs and may also be the result because the local TAFE has run out of subsidised hours in which to deliver the programs.

Under an auspicing arrangement, delivery is generally conducted by a school teacher, under supervision of an RTO. The school teacher must have trainer/assessor qualifications, vocational competencies and current industry skills.

As a result, delivery of VET in those schools is limited to areas in which teachers have the relevant qualifications and required experience. For example, subjects such as Business, and Sport and Recreation may be the only ones that teachers are able to deliver. This does not necessarily map to the industry and community needs of the particular region, there may be limited forms of work placement opportunities and, ultimately, may not lead to employment outcomes for the student.

In some regional areas, this is further exacerbated by high staff turnover. For example, if a school organizes a two year program based on the skills of a particular teacher and that teacher leaves the area, then that program is at risk of non-completion.

Auspicing can also pose the highest risk. A Training Accreditation Council (TAC) Strategic Industry Audit Report in 2014 (**TAC Strategic Audit Report**), showed that schools who were delivering under this model experienced more compliance and quality issues than other models.⁷

⁵ Department of Education, *Student-centred funding and one line budgets: A new way of resourcing and working*, provided to RREAC at its meeting on 12 February 2016.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Western Australia, Training Accreditation Council, *Strategic Industry Audit Report: 2014 Strategic Industry Audit of Delivery of VET in Schools in Western Australia* (Online), October 2014, pages 9 and 10. Available: <http://www.tac.wa.gov.au/newsandevent/Pages/VET-in-Schools-Strategic-Industry-Audit-Report.aspx> [accessed 3 February 2016].

Anecdotally, RREAC has heard of:

- Qualifications being selected due to ease of delivery, not necessarily because of other factors such as a student's career aspirations.
- Teachers not knowing what to do to establish their "industry currency" and having to source industry professional development so that they are able to deliver the programs.
- Students having to transfer out of a successful two year program due to a teacher leaving and no other teacher being able to deliver the program.
- Staff transiency in industry has meant that networks are affected. This can impact on the quality, and access to, a workplace training or placement environment.

RREAC has been informed that the fixed rates State Training Providers are required to charge for auspicing are significantly below the cost of delivery and may not be sustainable.

Timetabling – TAFEs and schools

RREAC noted that in some instances while appropriate VET courses are offered by a local TAFE and there are sufficient students to enrol in the course, the school elects to deliver courses under auspicing arrangements or through private training providers. RREAC noted that this occurred despite very close physical proximity between TAFEs and schools.

RREAC understands that these situations arise when there are difficulties with, or inflexibility of, timetabling between schools and TAFEs.

As has been emphasised elsewhere *"Schools which are successful are flexible in their timetabling, and are able to willingly release students for training and workplace experience, frequently in conjunction with those from other schools. Partnering training providers and employers also demonstrate flexibility"*.⁸

RREAC believes that there is scope for the development of more cooperative arrangements between schools and TAFEs when exploring partnerships to deliver VET courses; such arrangements remaining cognisant of each partner's strategic objectives and organisational timetables.

2.2 Lack of access to vocational training

Anecdotally, RREAC has heard of:

- Difficulties of providing robust and diverse VETiS programs due to lack of student numbers, poor attendance, low literacy and numeracy.
- Schools using VETiS programs as an engagement strategy and not as a potential employment program.
- Schools frustrated by local State Training Providers being unable to provide a program due to funding restrictions.
- State Training Providers only being able to offer employment outcome programs rather than engagement programs.
- Problems for regions to source workplace learning opportunities; transport is also an issue in some of the remote locations.

⁸ Western Australia, Department of Training and Workforce Development, VETinfoNet, *Good Practice Resources* (Online), Government of Western Australia, Available: <http://www.vetinfo.net.dtwd.wa.gov.au/VETinfoSchools/Pages/GoodPracticeResources.aspx> [accessed 3 February 2016]. Resources include good practice models.

- Industry not being aware of VETiS opportunities, particularly being able to take students for work placement.
- A lack of industry involvement in programs delivering VETiS.
- Concentration of programs delivering VETiS to one or two industries and no exposure to other industries such as hospitality and retail (small business).
- Students saying that their career exposure was limited to the industries of the region and no other occupations.

Thin markets

In addition to the issue about school capability in offering VETiS subjects, there is also an issue of “thin markets” for delivery of VETiS. A “thin market” is when there are a small number of students wanting to access a particular qualification and there are not enough students to make it financially viable for delivery by an RTO.

Funding to State Training Providers for institutional based training is capped.⁹ State Training Provider delivery of a specific course depends on having a minimum number of students to make delivery feasible for the provider. For example, a regional State Training Provider may need 12 students to cover all of their delivery costs for one qualification.

Private training providers may have a bit more flexibility around this, but they still require enough students to make course provision financially viable. For these RTOs, often they also have to add considerable travel costs to the program as well.

Therefore, delivery of vocational qualifications in a regional location often can't be centred on individual student career aspirations; instead it may be centred on what is more easily available to, and deliverable by, the school.

RREAC understands that DTWD provides a substantial loading to its funding rates for regional training providers.

Work placement

As well as cost, other requirements limit student choice for VETiS in the regions. Most vocational qualifications require the student to complete a work placement. This obviously is of benefit to the student as it gives them real work experience. But in many regional areas, workplaces may not be available, or easily accessed. So, again student choice may be restricted to what is available rather than their own career aspirations.

Employment outcomes, engagement strategy and the development of competencies

RREAC understands that DTWD focuses on supporting VETiS which has an occupational outcome, while the school sector has a broader aim of encouraging students to complete a minimum certificate II qualification to achieve their WACE, with course relevance to overall industry needs not the main consideration. RREAC notes that successful VETiS programs encompass both engagement and employment outcomes.

RREAC noticed that as a consequence of programs for VETiS, student engagement was improved and there was a positive effect on student attendance. However, it was also brought to RREAC's attention that this may contribute to other issues – one is that most qualifications

⁹ DTWD provides a fixed allocation for State Training Providers to deliver institutional based training to secondary students. All school-based apprenticeships and traineeships are funded by DTWD and are not subject to a funding cap.

in the VET sector have been developed for employment outcomes and as such require exposure to a workplace. If the student completes the qualification without that exposure, then questions may arise about the quality of the delivery and whether the student should be deemed “competent”.

In some discussions, it was suggested that rather than industry-specific VET qualifications being used, course content could contain a focus on the development of competencies that employers want rather than qualifications in a particular area. Transferable competencies might assist in changing or limited job markets and might be more appropriate to facilitate engagement strategies. One model might be the existing Aboriginal School-Based Training Program.¹⁰

RREAC notes that there is a cap on funding of the Aboriginal School-Based Training Program and there are no funded engagement programs for non-aboriginal students.

The development of transferable competencies has recently been highlighted by the Foundation for Young Australians in its report *The New Basics*, where it reported on the demand from employers for enterprise skills.¹¹ These are transferable skills that allow young people to be enterprising so they can navigate complex careers across a range of industries and professions. The terms used to describe these skills vary across different contexts: sometimes called generic, soft, or 21st century skills. They include problem solving, communication skills, digital literacy, teamwork, presentation skills, critical thinking, creativity, and financial literacy and are different from technical skills which are specific to a particular task, role or industry.

RREAC encourages the investigation and development of VET course content that contains a focus on the development of competencies that employers want rather than qualifications in a particular area. Transferable competencies might assist in changing or limited job markets and might be more appropriate to facilitate engagement strategies.

2.3 System and process issues

Anecdotally, RREAC has heard of:

- Teachers feeling pressured to organize programs delivering VETiS as well as their existing programs and finding it difficult to manage their workload.
- School staff demonstrating a lack of understanding of vocational training.
- Staff lacking access to adequate support.
- Schools not having administrative guidelines for the running of programs delivering VET.
- Staff in some schools working in this area in a full time role and others part time.
- Teachers identifying that the teacher:student ratio doesn't seem to be related to the number of VET students but reliant on the discretion of the principal.
- Support staff noting a lack of commitment from some principals to support programs delivering VETiS.

¹⁰ Refer to -

<http://www.vetinfonet.dtwd.wa.gov.au/VETpolicyandguidelines/Pages/AboriginalSchoolBasedTraining.aspx>.

¹¹ Foundation for Young Australians, *The New Basics: Big data reveals the skills young people need for the New Work Order*. April 2016. Available at <http://www.fya.org.au> [accessed 28 April 2016].

- Teachers steering a student towards a particular qualification because it will help with student engagement rather than as a pathway to employment.¹²

State Government initiatives

RREAC notes that the State Government has undertaken a number of initiatives to reform VETiS and address industry concerns and improve student outcomes:

- The strategic direction of VETiS and responsibilities between the portfolios of education, and training and workforce development have been outlined in a Joint Ministerial Statement¹³ and supplemented by Vocational Education and Training in Schools Guidelines.¹⁴
- Good Practice Models which showcase quality VETiS programs, including a regional one, have been published by DTWD.¹⁵
- DTWD, in consultation with industry training councils, has produced the VETiS *Qualifications Register*,¹⁶ to advise students, parents, schools and RTOs on the suitability of qualifications for delivery to secondary students. RREAC has been advised that while DTWD funding is strictly aligned to the industry agreed Qualifications Register, schools are not required to follow the advice.

In addition RREAC has been advised by DoE¹⁷ that in late 2013 the Minister for Education and the (then) Minister for Training and Workforce Development requested that their two respective department Directors General, together with the Chief Executive Officers of the Department of Education Services and SCSA, form a working group concerning VET in Schools (**VETiS Working Group**). The key focus of the VETiS Working Group was the changes to the WACE, relating to the VET qualification requirement. Senior representatives from the Department of Treasury and the respective Ministers' offices also attended the meetings.

The DoE has advised RREAC¹⁸ that the role of the VETiS Working Group was to identify and mitigate any of the identified risks that VET students might face in meeting the requirements of the WACE as of 2016; and to subsequently advise the Ministers of any of issues that required further consideration. The DoE now considers the implementation of the WACE changes and the preparedness of schools to deliver VET outcomes as part of the WACE for

¹² RREAC notes that successful VET programs encompass both engagement and employment outcomes.

¹³ Western Australia, Department of Education and Department of Training and Workforce Development, *Joint Ministerial Statement on Vocational Education and Training in Schools* (Online), Government of Western Australia, 2014, Available: <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/guidelines/joint-ministerial-statement-on-vocational-education-and-training-in-schools.en?cat-id=3457121> [accessed 3 February 2016].

¹⁴ Western Australia, Department of Education and Department of Training and Workforce Development, *Vocational Education and Training in Schools Guidelines* (Online), Government of Western Australia, Available: <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/guidelines/vocational-education-and-training-in-schools-guidelines.en?cat-id=3457121> [accessed 3 February 2016].

¹⁵ Western Australia, Department of Training and Workforce Development, VETinfoNet, *Good Practice Resources* (Online), Government of Western Australia, Available: <http://www.vetinfo.net.dtwd.wa.gov.au/VETinfoNet/Pages/GoodPracticeResources.aspx> [accessed 3 February 2016]. Resources include good practice models.

¹⁶ Refer to footnote 1.

¹⁷ As advised by Mr Stephen Baxter, Executive Director, Statewide Planning and Delivery, Department of Education, 25 March 2016.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

2016 as complete. The DoE has advised that it is anticipated a smaller policy group will be established at the appropriate time to further progress future models of funding and delivery.

RREAC notes that the strengthening of support mechanisms for school-based delivery arrangements were recommendations of the TAC Strategic Audit Report.¹⁹ As noted by that report, *“With no enforceable guidelines on the types of qualifications to be delivered as part of VETiS programs, schools and RTOs are able to choose from any endorsed Training Package or accredited course. This is regardless of the appropriateness or effectiveness of the selected qualification/course in providing students with work ready skills to assist them in the transition from schooling to the workforce.”*²⁰

The DoE has advised RREAC that as a consequence, workshops were delivered state-wide during 2014 and 2015 that focused on addressing areas identified in the audit, including risk assessment; currency and competency; delivery and assessment strategies; assessment and validation processes; and language, literacy and numeracy requirements for VET qualifications. These workshops and professional learning were planned and delivered in partnership with TAC, industry training councils, DTWD, and school principals.²¹

The DoE further advised that in addition, three forums specifically targeting regional and remote school leaders were conducted. These were at no cost to schools and were dedicated to issues related to secondary pathways, with a focus on VET and workplace learning. The DoE has advised that representatives from TAC and SCSA addressed these forums specifically speaking to the recommendations arising from the TAC Strategic Audit Report and the new 2015 Standards for RTOs. Approximately 150 school leaders from regional and remote schools attended these sessions.²²

DTWD has informed RREAC while there are no enforceable guidelines on qualifications for VETiS programs, DTWD only funds qualifications which industry considers suitable for secondary students; this helps ensure students have work ready skills and are not disadvantaged by completing qualifications through a VETiS program.

By way of illustration -

- In 2014, around 15% of DTWD’s VETiS funded course enrolments were in building and construction qualifications and around 5% were in arts, sport and recreation.

¹⁹ Western Australia, Training Accreditation Council, *Strategic Industry Audit Report: 2014 Strategic Industry Audit of Delivery of VET in Schools in Western Australia* (Online), October 2014, pages 9 and 10. Available: <http://www.tac.wa.gov.au/newsandevent/Pages/VET-in-Schools-Strategic-Industry-Audit-Report.aspx> [accessed 3 February 2016]. *“Recommendation: School-based delivery arrangements*

3) The Training Accreditation Council to work collaboratively with the respective bodies that have roles, responsibilities or influence in the delivery of VETiS to strengthen education and support mechanisms for schools.

4) The Training Accreditation Council to work collaboratively with SCSA and stakeholder parties to develop support mechanisms for schools and training providers wishing to engage in auspice/partnership arrangements for VETiS delivery.”

²⁰ Western Australia, Training Accreditation Council, *Strategic Industry Audit Report: 2014 Strategic Industry Audit of Delivery of VET in Schools in Western Australia* (Online), October 2014, pages 7, 17-20. Available: <http://www.tac.wa.gov.au/newsandevent/Pages/VET-in-Schools-Strategic-Industry-Audit-Report.aspx> [accessed 3 February 2016].

²¹ As advised by Mr Stephen Baxter, Executive Director, Statewide Planning and Delivery, Department of Education, 25 March 2016.

²² *ibid.*

- In contrast, SCSA data indicates that in 2014 in Western Australia around 31% of VETiS enrolments were in arts, sport and recreation qualifications and around 4% were in building and construction.

RREAC observes that resources are being developed for teachers to provide industry specific information to help them improve the quality of training. These resources are being developed by TAC in collaboration with DTWD, DoE and the industry training councils.

RREAC notes that there is good collaboration between DTWD and the school sector with regard to developing and implementing VETiS initiatives, such as the Joint Ministerial Statement. DTWD regularly consults the school sector on policy development issues and attends forums to get feedback on issues “on the ground”.

Industry training councils are also actively involved in promoting quality VETiS. They provide industry advice for the VETiS Qualifications Register; establish school-based apprenticeships and traineeships to meet industry needs; and engage directly with schools to support their VETiS programs.

“Person dependent”

As a result of the factors mentioned above approaches to VETiS delivery can become “people dependent” and not “process dependent”. For example, if a school has someone with a strong industry background and experience in VETiS delivery, then comment received by RREAC indicated that those schools seem to do well. But this does not appear to be the case with many schools.

Further, as noted above at section 2.1, the use of auspicing arrangements by schools may rely heavily on the qualifications of a particular teacher. Program delivery is therefore reliant on the teacher remaining at the school for the duration of the program; a significant factor in rural and remote areas where teacher attraction and retention is an ongoing challenge.²³

RREAC notes that the State Government has undertaken a number of initiatives to reform VETiS, address industry concerns and improve student outcomes. However, RREAC is of the view that there is a lack of consistent policy and insufficient process supporting programs delivering VETiS.

RREAC is concerned that an approach that is dependent on the attributes and networks of an individual who has a VETiS management role in a school or delivers VETiS programs is not sustainable.

RREAC believes that more needs to be done to ensure regional students have access to a range of quality VETiS options.

²³ For example refer to Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council, (February 2016), *Regional Report: Meetings in the Pilbara Region 26-28 October 2016*.

3. Industry Perspective

The achievement of a VET qualification signifies that a student has demonstrated competency against the skills and knowledge required to perform effectively in the workplace. Industry expects²⁴ that VETiS is delivered in the following way:

- students have access to industry standard equipment
- delivery by people with relevant and current industry experience, and
- it meets expectations as to volume of learning and includes time in the actual workplace.

As a result the student would be “work ready” by having the workplace exposure and entry level skills appropriate to the industry. These are seen by employers as essential elements of quality VET delivery.

RREAC was informed that through the WA industry training council network, which is funded by DTWD, that industry has expressed concerns about a number of issues with VET qualifications for delivery in schools.²⁵ Some of the concerns from industry include:

- **Access to a realistic work environment**

There was a school which was delivering an agricultural qualification without having access to a farm. Students therefore had limited access to livestock and farming practices. Students wouldn't have the entry level skills to apply to a working farm.

- **Too high a level of qualification**

RREAC has been advised that it is generally accepted by industry training councils that qualifications over a Certificate II would be difficult for a student to achieve, particularly if they don't have access to a workplace;²⁶ students would be unable to achieve the occupational outcomes of the qualification. There have been instances in regional locations where students have undertaken qualifications at Certificate IV level in subjects such as Business. RREAC has been advised that industry views have been expressed that, generally, if students do get a job in the industry, their skill levels are not satisfactory.

- **Pre-trade qualifications being delivered in schools**

RREAC was also advised that delivery of pre-trade qualification in schools may often be unsuitable, unless it is as a School-Based Apprentice or Trainee. Industry recommends that trade pathway qualification requires appropriate work placements and also that they are delivered by a trade qualified trainer. Regional schools are often not able to comply with the above recommendations; however, there have still been instances of schools offering these qualifications institutionally.

²⁴ Australia, Education Council, *Preparing Secondary Students for Work: A framework for vocational learning and VET delivered to secondary students*, (Online), Commonwealth of Australia, 2014, page 14. Available: <http://scseec.edu.au/EC-Reports-and-Publications.aspx> [accessed 3 February 2016].

²⁵ As advised by RREAC Member Kay Gerard, CEO, Food, Fibre and Timber Industries Training Council (WA) Inc. Ms Gerard is a member of the WA Industry Training Council.

²⁶ As noted in the 'advice' column of the VETiS Qualifications Register, maintained by the Department of Training and Workforce Development. Available: <http://www.vetinfonet.dtwd.wa.gov.au/VETinschools/Pages/QualificationsRegister.aspx> [accessed 3 February 2016].

- **Non-Compliance with Training Package requirements**

Qualifications in Sport and Recreation are very popular with schools as they are auspiced with an RTO and the Physical Education teacher is often the primary lecturer. However, as noted in the TAC Strategic Audit Report, programs in this area showed the highest non-compliance with 93% of auspiced arrangements not meeting the quality standards.

Anecdotally, the WA industry training council network has heard of:

- Qualified students being at possible risk of injury due to wrong safety practices when using a piece of equipment.
- Qualified students not being work ready and having no understanding of what responsibilities they have as an employee.
- Loss of productivity because a qualified student wasn't able to operate in a commercial environment as all training had been completed in a simulated environment.
- Students deemed competent on a piece of equipment that they have never used.
- Students having no work exposure during their studies.
- Teachers who have not been outside of the school environment and who are therefore not "industry current".
- Teachers using "simulated" work practices that are not realistic and also do not meet the training package requirements.
- Students being deemed "competent" and the assessment didn't meet the training package requirements.

The Catholic Education Office of Western Australia has confirmed that the last three examples are experienced in its sector.

Industry advice outlining how to deal with many of these issues is outlined in the VETiS Qualifications Register. Qualifications which industry considers unsuitable for secondary students are clearly identified. While there is no requirement for schools to follow this advice, RREAC has been advised that all DTWD-funded VETiS delivery from 2016 onward must be compliant with the Register. There are hundreds of qualifications on the VETiS Qualifications Register. DTWD advised RREAC that the evidence shows TAFEs across the State are delivering a wide array of choice to students; however, the degree to which this sufficient for regional areas will need further exploration.

As noted in an earlier RREAC report,²⁷ focus group sessions held with industry and service providers conducted in the Pilbara region in October 2015 evidenced strong enthusiasm and commitment to the region and its education and training pathways and outcomes. Partnerships between industry and government to support educational and training outcomes are considered an important initiative in the regions. It is also clear that local solutions to issues must involve the local providers, employers and wider communities.

²⁷ Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council, (February 2016), *Regional Report: Meetings in the Pilbara Region 26-28 October 2016*.

4. Good practice models

In 2014, DTWD undertook research to identify Good Practice Models for delivery of VETiS.²⁸ Five critical success factors that underpin successful programs delivering VETiS were identified. DTWD also showcased selected schools, including a regional one, which had embedded the five critical success factors in their planning to provide successful programs delivering VETiS; and highlighted how these schools help their students to achieve quality VETiS outcomes.

The five factors are incorporated into the Joint Ministerial Statement:²⁹

Leadership, continuity and partnerships

Schools which are successful have strong leadership. Their principals are actively involved in the promotion and operation of programs delivering VETiS and the schools' VET coordinators and teachers are similarly committed. Schools actively engage with industry, training providers and employers and form meaningful and collaborative partnerships.

Student cohort and parent liaison

Schools which are successful are mindful of the needs of different student cohorts and support these as required. Parent involvement is recognised as being crucial to this success.

Vision, place and configuration

Schools which are successful are more likely to work in partnership with other schools to share course offerings, and combine teaching and learning resources. Pathways for students are clear, and endorsed by industry. Most students are working at a Certificate II or higher (if appropriate).

Flexibility

Schools which are successful are flexible in their timetabling, and are able to willingly release students for training and workplace experience, frequently in conjunction with those from other schools. Partnering training providers and employers also demonstrate flexibility.

Course content, structure and evaluation

Schools which are successful offer VET programs which are relevant to the age, interests and strengths of the student. Teachers and trainers have the relevant qualifications and experience to deliver to industry standards as required by the national VET standards.

Additionally, RREAC notes the framework for vocational learning and VET delivered to secondary students.³⁰

²⁸ Western Australia, Department of Training and Workforce Development, VETinfoNet, *Good Practice Resources* (Online), Government of Western Australia, Available:

<http://www.vetinfo.net.dtwd.wa.gov.au/VETinschools/Pages/GoodPracticeResources.aspx>

[accessed 3 February 2016].

²⁹ Western Australia, Department of Education and Department of Training and Workforce Development, *Joint Ministerial Statement on Vocational Education and Training in Schools* (Online), Government of Western Australia, 2014, Available: <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/guidelines/joint-ministerial-statement-on-vocational-education-and-training-in-schools>.

[accessed 3 February 2016].

³⁰ Refer to footnote 24.

5. Conclusions

1. RREAC notes that there are many examples of good VETiS practice with successful engagement and employment outcomes for participants. However, RREAC is of the view that some regional students, particularly those in smaller remote locations, are currently disadvantaged in both access to and the quality of programs delivering VETiS due to a number of challenges identified in this report.
2. Recurring themes arising during RREAC's inquiries were -
 - capability of schools to deliver vocational qualifications
 - lack of access to vocational training, and
 - system and process issues.
3. These challenges may also apply to metropolitan schools, but there is the potential for them to be more pronounced in a rural or remote context.
4. In this respect -
 - RREAC recognises that the DoE VET funding approach affords necessary flexibility for schools to respond to local conditions. However, individualised approaches may also run the risk of producing inconsistencies in policy application and in practice, even between schools in close geographical proximity.
 - RREAC is of the view that there is a lack of consistent policy and insufficient process supporting programs delivering VETiS.
 - RREAC believes that there is scope for the development of more cooperative arrangements between schools and TAFEs when exploring partnerships to deliver VET courses; such arrangements remaining cognisant of each partner's strategic objectives and organisational timetables.
 - RREAC encourages the investigation and development of VET course content that contains a focus on the development of competencies that employers want rather than qualifications in a particular area. Transferable competencies might assist in changing or limited job markets and might be more appropriate to facilitate engagement strategies.
 - RREAC is concerned that an approach that is dependent on the attributes and networks of an individual who has a VETiS management role in a school or delivers VETiS programs is not sustainable.
5. RREAC acknowledges that the State Government is aware of many of the issues and has undertaken a number of initiatives to reform VETiS, address industry concerns and improve student outcomes. However, RREAC is of the view that more needs to be done to ensure regional students have access to a range of quality VETiS options.
6. Within the current climate of regionalism where there is an appetite to do things differently, and with evidence of strong regional commitment, RREAC believes that there is an opportunity for enhanced cooperation and collaboration in the development, management and delivery of VETiS.

7. In order to address region-specific matters in a cohesive manner across relevant government and private sectors, RREAC favours the development of a region-specific vehicle/platform for consultation, collaboration and change for each region.
8. RREAC considers that one approach would be to develop a Pilot Program. The Pilot Program would establish a Regional Steering Committee that will develop a collaborative partnership model, to look at ways that VETiS can be improved in regional areas. RREAC's observations on components of a Pilot Program are outlined in Appendix 1.
9. In this respect RREAC notes that:
 - some regions may have developed an informal VET network³¹ and/or a more formal VET network,³² and
 - other regions have utilised the network in their Workforce Development Alliances by forming a subcommittee with a focus on workplace training (for example, Wheatbelt and the Mid West).
10. RREAC recognises intersections in the VETiS landscape between regional development, education, and training and workforce development, with differing policy and funding approaches. RREAC believes that there is scope for enhanced interdepartmental cooperation and collaboration by raising the matters outlined in this report with the relevant departments for consideration.
11. Questions that would benefit further consideration by the departments include:
 - How might the development of a Pilot Program be approached?
 - Is there a capacity to leverage existing structures?
 - Is the formation of a discrete structure desirable?

6. Recommendations

1. That the Minister for Education notes the information in this report.
2. That the Minister consider the development of a cross sector Pilot Program as outlined in this report.

29 April 2016

³¹ For example, in the Pilbara, RREAC was advised that there is a strong network based on the high schools and industry providers which informally liaise to discuss matters; however, RREAC notes that employers are only involved with regard to specific alliances that they have with a school.

³² For example, in the Pilbara there is a Pilbara VET Network that connects schools, VET coordinators and the Pilbara Education Regional Office, but RREAC understands that employers and industry are not formally represented.

Appendix 1

Regional VET in Schools Pilot Program

To look at ways that VETiS can be improved in regional areas, RREAC suggests that a pilot program could be funded.

Objective

To establish a Regional Steering Committee that will develop a collaborative partnership model:

- between businesses, schools and training organisations,
- that benefits the industry, education and training requirements of the respective region, and
- that includes clear guidelines and expectations for all groups.

The model would factor in the 5 Critical Success Factors mentioned in the Joint Ministerial Statement on Vocational Education and Training in Schools, Government of Western Australia, 2014.

Program Process

- Expressions of interest from regions through the Regional Development Commissions would be sought. The project would be led by the respective Regional Education Office.
- Establishment of a Steering Committee to include Regional Education Office staff, school leaders, industry and government representatives; a member of a parent association (if available); RTOs and specific service providers (if appropriate). (This could form later into a VET Advisory Council for the Region).
- Research the industry and employment trends for the region, with a specific look at workplace opportunities for school students; also identify the various employment services available in the region.
- Research into the demographics of the regional schools, the career aspirations of the students, the support services available for the student.
- Look at the capacity and capability of local RTOs as well as the capacity of schools to deliver VET.
- Pilot two or three qualifications for delivery – ensuring that the program encompasses the Five Critical Success Factors mentioned above.
- Constantly analyse and monitor the program and in particular identify the barriers and opportunities within the project.
- Develop a model based on the learnings of the project. If successful, the model could be implemented in other regions.

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