

REVIEW INTO VOCATIONAL AND APPLIED LEARNING PATHWAYS IN SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOLING

The Victorian Government is undertaking a major review of VCAL and vocational education and training (VET) delivered to school students to ensure that all Victorian secondary school students have access to high-quality vocational and applied learning options.

The Review will make recommendations to reform VCAL and VET delivered to school students to improve access to and transitions for students between, school, post-secondary education and work.

John Firth, former CEO of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, will lead the review.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Largely as a result of significant State Government investment, nearly half a million new jobs have been created in Victoria since 2014. There is unprecedented demand for skilled workers to deliver the State's infrastructure projects and to work in our health, disability and education sectors.

We need to ensure that all Victorian school students are given the opportunity, experiences and training to take part in this jobs boom.

Victoria has some real strengths in vocational and applied learning pathways. The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) is unique in the context of Australia. It provides a relatively flexible way of engaging students in vocational learning. Vocational Education and Training delivered to school students (VETiS), which is undertaken as part of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) and the VCAL, helps build students' technical skills and understand certain industries and occupations. Students can also commence apprenticeships and traineeships while at school, through a School Based Apprenticeship or Traineeship (SBAT) or a Head Start Apprenticeship and Traineeship.

However, the quality of these programs varies. While some schools deliver well-operating and highly regarded vocational pathway programs, other school's programs are less successful. Unfortunately, this means that some students are not receiving the education they deserve.

Students, parents, employers and other members of the community are unclear of the purpose of vocational and applied learning in schools and how it prepares students for life after school. As a result, perceptions towards VCAL are often negative and in some instances, this extends to VETiS and SBATs. These perceptions can affect students' decision making about their school and post-school pathways as well as resource decisions made by schools.

Our students, their families, and employers need to be able to trust the quality of vocational and applied learning. Students need better information to support their decision making and flexibility to achieve their career aspirations. Students also need a genuine choice of pathways that best match their strengths and interests. Employers need to be sure there is a pipeline of talent to give them confidence to invest in Victoria. There is a need to design a clear, consistent, credible and high quality applied learning system that improves access to, and transitions between, school, post-secondary education and work.

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The review will make recommendations to reform vocational and applied learning in senior secondary schooling for VCAL, VETiS and SBATs, with regards to:

Objective of applied learning

- What is the current purpose of VCAL, VETiS and SBATs?
- How well are they meeting their current purpose?
- What should their objectives be?

Design

- How can the quality and rigour of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment in VCAL or VETiS be improved?
- How could VCAL be redesigned to ensure effective pathways and opportunities available to students upon completion of their secondary school education?
- How can VCAL and VETiS better align with the needs of employers and industry?
- How can VCAL and VETiS better prepare students for real jobs in growth industries?
- What should the relationship be between VCAL and other certificates?
- How can students be better supported to make informed decisions about their pathways, and the benefits of applied learning?
- How can a reformed VCAL and VETiS continue to meet the needs of all students who may elect to pursue study in an applied stream, including those with special needs?
- How should VET training packages and accredited courses be designed or utilised for VCAL or VETiS?

Delivery

- What reforms are needed to ensure that every Victorian secondary school student will have access to consistently high-quality applied learning options? How can barriers to access, including infrastructure, funding and administrative processes, be addressed?
- Should a reconceptualised VCAL be available in all schools or accessible to all Victorian senior secondary students?
- What workforce reforms are required to consistently ensure: the supply of high-quality educators with the right skills and experience to deliver applied learning across the state; and that the teaching or training profession is well-supported and qualified in best practice applied learning approaches?
- What is the relative effectiveness of different types of providers at delivering the VCAL and VETiS?
- How can industry, the Department of Education and schools better coordinate the vocational education and training of school students?
- What should be the role of different providers of VCAL and VETiS to school students?
- How can delivery include strengthened integration of all current offerings including careers advice and Head Start so that there is a more coherent and joined up pathway?

Outcomes

- How should student outcomes and the success of VCAL programs be measured and reported at the system and school level?
- How should the outcomes of VETIS and SBATs be measured?
- How can pathways for students, including applications processes for higher education and training courses be simplified?

Reputation

- How can we improve public confidence in the vocational and applied learning pathway so that students, their families, employers and tertiary institutions value and understand the benefits of these options?

FINAL REPORT

A final report will be delivered in May 2020 and provide advice on reforms to VCAL, VETIS and SBATs (including HeadStart apprenticeships and traineeships).

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