

# SMART AND SKILLED: SUBMISSION COVER SHEET

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Is this submission made on behalf of an organisation?

Yes

If Yes, please fill out the following:

<b>Name of organisation:</b>	NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council
<b>Organisation's main function eg training provider, job service provider, community organisation, government agency</b>	Peak professional body for teachers, student teachers, researchers, teacher educators, program managers, and policy makers in adult literacy and numeracy in NSW
<b>Name of authorising person:</b>	Keiko Yasukawa
<b>Position:</b>	President
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Submission should be treated as IN CONFIDENCE?

Yes  No

Do you consent to your submission being made available on the Department's website?

Yes  No



## NSW Adult Literacy & Numeracy Council

### **Submission**

To: Ms Kate Johnston  
Subject: Smart and Skilled: making NSW number one  
Date: 4 November, 2011  
From: NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council

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Dear Kate,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a response to your Discussion paper: Smart and Skilled: making NSW number one.

The NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council is a membership based organisation representing adult literacy and numeracy practitioners, researchers, program managers, teacher educators, student teachers, and provider organisations.

Please find attached comments from our organisation which we hope can inform your project.

Yours sincerely,

Keiko Yasukawa

President, NSW Adult Literacy and Numeracy Council

## 1. INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### 1.1 How can we engage more of the working age population in vocational education and training?

For job-seekers, it is important that there are clear employment benefits for participating in VET. In other words, they need to be able to see that there is gainful employment at the end of their course, not just casual or other precarious forms of employment. Employers also need to be prepared to offer meaningful work experiences that will enable VET learners to make informed choices about the industry/ occupation in which to work and improve their chances of gaining employment in the area. For existing workers, the benefits of participating in further education needs to be clear, and employers must demonstrate this by providing support for their workers to undertake further education and training – eg through paid study time.

Both job-seekers and existing workers, need access to quality courses delivered by well qualified VET professionals who are able to create safe and effective learning environments and experiences for the learners. If they have a poor experience – eg failure, disregard to individual differences and needs, they are likely not to continue or re-engage in learning in the future.

There are also learners and potential learners who may need time to re-engage in formal learning before they can set clear vocational goals. Some of these learners may need time to develop their English language, literacy and/or numeracy in order to negotiate the vocational courses and to develop sufficient confidence to engage in formal training. These courses can include some ‘taster’ units in a range of vocational areas that have genuine employment prospects. Disengaged learners also require access to and funding for “wrap around” services so that they have greater possibilities of engaging in the learning and completing qualifications.

### 1.2 How can we equip people with the skills they need to participate more fully in work?

Both the terms ‘skills’ and ‘full participation’ are contestable terms.

### 1.3 How can we improve training and job outcomes for disadvantaged learners?

Different pedagogical strategies and support services are needed to support learners with different kinds of disadvantages are needed. Teachers who can critically reflect on their practice from a sound theoretical based about pedagogy are more likely to be able to devise, implement, evaluate and refine appropriate pedagogical interventions that can make some sustained difference in the students’ learning and in their confidence and self-esteem as learners.

Institutions will need to have within them, and/ or have sustainable relationships with support services and so that the students are fully supported during their study. It is also important that the educational provider can provide career counselling and can facilitate learners’ transition to meaningful transition to work – that is, career advice and counselling on vocational choices that lead to realistic employment options that also take into account students’ interests and needs.

Some at risk students will also require intensive integrated literacy and numeracy skills development in specific areas as part of their vocational study. Some of these students may not self-assess themselves as needing to further develop their literacy and numeracy, but who would benefit from integrated and inclusive literacy and numeracy delivery. For all of these kinds of needs, a policy is needed that enables providers to more easily package units from existing curricula and provide wrap around services to create the kinds of integrated learning and teaching that will help students.

Improving job outcomes also require willingness on the part of employers to appreciate disadvantages - not as deficits of individuals, but as products of wider problems in society that create inequalities and marginalisation of some groups of people. VET's role in workforce development can help to challenge some orthodoxies about social inclusion – ie the idea that there is some unproblematic status quo into which 'disadvantaged people' can be accommodated.<sup>1</sup>

1.4 How can we maximise vocational education and training opportunities for people in rural and remote communities?

Engage closely with communities and ensure that training offered is in partnership and likely to lead to sustainable work opportunities

1.5 How can we encourage more people to complete higher-level qualifications?

There are two separate but related issues here – ie completion of qualifications, and completion of higher-level qualifications. For higher-level qualifications, as for any qualifications, literacy and numeracy of the discipline and practice are needed to be integrated into the pedagogy. Literacy and numeracy development is not just a concern at the 'lower-levels'; there are different literacies and numeracies needed and which are learned at all academic levels. By providing the meaning-making resources, students are more likely to succeed, assuming that there is a genuine incentive to complete and succeed - eg improved job opportunities, and further education.

For disengaged learners it is essential that there are pathways provided by RTOs accessing public funding to ensure that learners can progress from foundation skills courses to higher level courses in their preferred industry area with access to support services.

1.6 How can we build better pathways to higher-level qualifications across our education sectors?

The contestable funding environment can create barriers for the creation of the kinds of pathways needed between different sectors and parts of post-compulsory education. However, if criteria were built in that required providers to demonstrate the kinds of pathways into and from the courses that students will have available, some of these barriers might be minimised.

1.7 To what extent could a training entitlement increase training participation and meet the future skill needs of individuals, businesses, regions and our economy?

1.8 What should an entitlement to training cover?

1.9 How do we match individual demand with industry needs under an entitlement model?

1.10 Under an entitlement, how should the level of investment in training made by government, individuals and employers be determined?

1.11 Should student loans be available for government-funded vocational qualifications? If so, what should they look like?

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<sup>1</sup> See for example, Rogers, A (2006) Escaping the slums, or changing the slums? Lifelong learning and social transformation, *Journal of Lifelong Education*, 25 (2), 125-137.

## 2. TARGET VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND REGIONAL NEEDS

- 2.1 What is the best way to ensure that the Government's funds for vocational education and training flow to areas that maximise economic benefits for our businesses and the State?
- 2.2 How can we maximise vocational education and training opportunities to meet the needs of our regions?
- 2.3 How can our vocational education and training system adapt and be responsive to meet the changing needs of business and industry and changes in the economy?

## 3. ROLE AND FUNCTION OF TAFE NSW AS THE PUBLIC PROVIDER

- 3.1 What should the role of TAFE NSW be in the context of a broader entitlement to training in our vocational education and training system?

TAFE NSW has the infrastructure, history, reputation and the human resources to provide a 'best practice' model of VET in NSW – and nationally. As a public provider, it is important to uphold this reputation, and 'raise the bar' of VET provision generally.

- 3.2 How should TAFE NSW be better utilised to meet the future skill needs of our workforce?  
Funded adequately to provide workforce development services for industry, including workplace literacy and numeracy embedded at all AQF levels as required

## 4. GREATER CHOICE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND EMPLOYERS

- 4.1 What type of information is needed by individuals and employers to inform their choice of vocational education and training?

Learners with lower levels of literacy (specifically critical literacy) will need clear, accurate information about choices of training and educational and career pathways to ensure that they make good training choices.

- 4.2 How can we continue to assure the quality of vocational education and training in the context of greater choice?

It is important to remember that VET students' most important experiences of VET are in the classroom/ learning environment with their fellow students and their teacher. That experience must be of high quality if students are going to continue their course and succeed. The quality of the learning experience must not be seen as negotiable. Therefore, the determination of the factors that have to be examined to assure quality must start from the students' experience and the kinds of factors that make improve or decrease this quality. We believe that some critical factors are:

- The quality of teaching, including teachers' disciplinary expertise and currency and pedagogical skills and knowledge
- Effective pathways into VET and from VET to employment and/ or further study
- Student support services in the college/ provider organisation, including career counseling, special needs support, libraries, cafeteria
- Accessibility, both culturally and physically
- Relationship with the local community, including knowledge of the local industries, cultural histories

- 4.3 How could increased contestability of government-funded training support greater participation in vocational education and training and greater take-up of higher-level qualifications?
- 4.4 What factors should the Government consider in increasing contestability of training funds?  
See also 4.2 above. Increasing contestability should not be done at the expense of teachers' pay and conditions. It is important to agree to some acceptable minimum pay and conditions of all teachers in the VET sector, along with acceptable minimum teaching qualifications of teachers.
- 4.5 How should community service obligations be managed in a contestable market?  
Provision of funding to TAFE or similar organisations with demonstrated capacity in local regions to develop what the specific community needs.
- 4.6 What criteria and what accountabilities should training organisations meet to be eligible for government-funding?  
See 4.1 and 4.3 above.

## 5. IMPROVE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMPLETION RATES

### 5.1 How can we improve vocational education and training completions?

Literacy and numeracy practitioners who our organisation represents, have a special role in developing the VET learners' literacy and numeracy practices so that they can succeed in their course and in employment. We consider literacy and numeracy to be an integral dimension of good pedagogy, and see the need for a policy that supports effective integrated literacy and numeracy delivery. We are aware of the work that IBSA is undertaking to develop a new Training Package in Foundation Skills; however, an equally if not more important area is at the delivery level – what teachers actually do in their classrooms.

For effective integrated pedagogies to develop, vocational and literacy/ numeracy teachers need to be supported to work together in planning, programming delivery and assessment. They need to have joint and shared ownership of the students' learning experiences. Casual employment patterns, minimalist qualification requirements, and minimal professional development support all work against teachers working together.

The impact of contestability of funding in the absence of clearly stated quality criteria also interfere with the implementation of good pedagogy. Teachers are pressured to deliver as cheaply and as quickly as the competitor RTO next door, regardless of the needs of the students and the quality of the learning.

Black and Yasukawa's recent research on Literacy and Numeracy support in VET offers recommendations and models of integrated delivery<sup>2</sup>.

### 5.2 In what critical areas should they be improved?

### 5.3 How can we improve completions for apprentices and trainees?

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<sup>2</sup> Black, S & Yasukawa, K (2011) *Working Together: Integrated literacy and numeracy support in vocational education and training*, Centre for Research in Learning and Change, <http://www.rilc.uts.edu.au/projects/working-together.html>

## 6. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

**If you would like to make any additional comments, please provide them below.**

Thank you for your input. When making your submission, please be mindful that the closing date for submissions is **5pm on Friday 4 November 2011**. Submissions can be lodged by:

**Email:** [submissions@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:submissions@det.nsw.edu.au)

**Mail:** Ms Kate Johnston

Smart and Skilled: making NSW number one, Submissions

NSW Department of Education and Communities

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