

**NSW Secondary Principals' Council**  
**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**  
**Final Position PAPER November 2022**

***Preamble***

The NSW Secondary Principals' Council (SPC) recognises the centrality of Vocational Education and Training within the broader NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) secondary curriculum provision. We particularly note that all VET (Vocational Educational and Training) learning and certification is undertaken in a nation-wide, industry driven context.

VET provision has three distinct components; distinct, yet related strategies are required to support.

1. SVET - school delivered VET
2. EVET – Vocational education and training delivered by TAFE NSW and other external providers.
3. SBATs – School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships

**Current context in DoE (Department of Education) NSW public schools**

VET enrolment trends over the past decade reflect in part, the broader challenges being experienced across our schools. Whilst participation rates have been stabilising in several KLA (key learning areas) areas; VET remains undervalued. The 2018 VET participation in schools overview of findings from the 2020 NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations survey relating to Vocational Education and Training (VET) participation in school, indicated that **81.9% of Year 12 completers** and **75.3% of Early school leavers** said VET courses were available at school.

All students attending a public high school in NSW have a right to access a diverse curriculum which includes Vocational Education and the opportunity to experience school to work programs ranging from Work Experience, Industry Training Placements to School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeships.

**Beyond school Implications and opportunities**

SPC, along with teachers, students, industry, and the community, value the breadth of curriculum, which enables students to have agency in their learning through choice and personalising their pathway through secondary school. VET provision occupies an essential and rapidly shifting national priority. Recent Covidian travails have exacerbated these challenges and sharpened nation-wide perceptions. The Commonwealth's recent strategy of offering a 50% subsidy for newly appointed apprentices and trainees is profoundly important and welcomed. The longer-term impact is not yet understood.

Opportunities for students across the state to access high quality vocational education programs can only adequately be delivered through the collaboration and the combined efforts of the NSW Department of Education, individual public secondary schools, TAFE, and other Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) working together in the best interests of students. The SPC recognises that VET provision is being enhanced by the sterling work of the Department's VET Consultative Group.

## **The SPC outlines 4 areas for Recommendations.**

1. Teacher distribution, training, and supply.
2. Administrative burden for schools
3. Infrastructure and investment
4. Partnership with TAFE NSW and other EVET providers

## **This position paper has been informed by the following DoE documents.**

- Looking to the future: report of the Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training [Shergold review] 2020
- IN THE SAME SENTENCE Bringing higher and vocational education together David Gonski AC and Peter Shergold AC 2021
- Staffing Agreement 2021-2023
- Department of Education Strategic Plan
- NSW Teacher Supply Strategy 2021-2031
- A Review of Rural and Remote Incentives in NSW Public Schools (September 2021)

### ***1. Staffing and Teacher shortages***

The NSW SPC is deeply concerned about the current shortage of qualified VET teachers and the looming gap, between the supply and demand for qualified VET teachers, that will increase over the next ten years, as outlined in the SPC Staffing position paper. Factors that have exacerbated this trend include a rapidly increasing number of student enrolments in schools (an approx. 1% annual increase across the system); increasing rates of teacher retirements and attrition (approximately 2.2% per annum for secondary schools); high vacancy rates for qualified teachers in all VET courses and TAS (Technology and Applied Studies) courses; and dramatically declining enrolments in teaching degrees across NSW universities (a decrease of 29% over 5 years), particularly in TAS subject specific areas.

The impacts of teaching shortages, and concurrent reductions in curriculum offerings in schools, are not limited to the education sphere. There will be broader social and economic implications for Australian society where shortages in trades, hospitality, engineering, medical and scientific services, and other related fields will be exacerbated by teacher shortages within the education system. The emerging crisis in appointing and retaining TAS/VET teachers represents a major challenge. The removal of subject categorisation for the ATAR will allow students to complete more VET courses, further compounding this issue.

It is important to note that knowledge of this staffing shortage is neither new nor unanticipated. The SPC has been calling for action in the face of teacher shortages, particularly in rural and remote schools, for many years. Whilst the SPC welcomes the efforts of the Department of Education in developing the NSW Teacher Supply Strategy 2021-2031 and the review of the Rural and Remote Incentives, there are deep reservations that the currently planned strategies will be insufficient to bridge this growing gap (SPC Staffing Position Paper 2022)

### ***NSW SPC Recommendations***

- 1.1 It is the SPC's position that immediate and impactful action must be taken on current teaching shortages. Whilst acknowledging the complexity of this task, the

consequences of falling short will have potentially even greater impact on TAS and VET subjects.

- 1.2 Urgent action in the teacher supply strategy 2021-2031 to increase the availability of qualified VET teachers.
- 1.3 Staffing entitlements should not be reduced when students undertake a VET course outside their school i.e., the new Rural and Remote trial should be implemented state-wide. Current arrangements undervalue the skilful work required to support and encourage these students. Both completion and retention rates can be significantly enhanced, SBATs included.
- 1.4 Address the inequity between schools in their capacity to deliver SVET courses in industry standard facilities, inclusive of trained teachers. Whilst the SPC broadly endorses the establishment of innovative programs such as Educational Pathways Program (EPP) and 'VET Hub' in high schools it has highlighted the inequities across schools and systems.
- 1.6 Careers Advisors play a key role in many of our schools. Staffing arrangements need urgent review - currently 1.0 CA for schools with 400-1300 students, including the allocation for Central Schools.
- 1.7 Schools receive 0.2 transition advisor for every 400 students or part thereof.
- 1.8 A Head Teacher VET be placed on a school's entitlement based on significant offering of VET staff/courses and/or SBAT (School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship) students.

## **2 Administrative workload and resourcing**

The delivery of VET courses is complex and challenging. The administration requirements for schools and teachers delivering SVET courses are formidable, requiring specialised knowledge and administrative effort. A strict interlace of compliance between the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), NESA and the Department of Education's own quality assurance processes, places a significant burden on schools. The SPC seeks systemic recognition of these challenges. Appropriate resourcing needs immediate action, to sustain the delivery of quality VET in schools.

### ***NSW SPC Recommendations***

- 2.6 Implement the recommendations from the Rural and Remote Report 2021 incentives with a focus on VET. This burden on VET Industry currency is keenest felt in rural and remote communities where the requirements for industry currency, updating of qualifications and the industry placements component of SVET are set against a lack of local industry and the tyranny of distance.
- 2.7 Release from face-to-face teaching of 0.1 FTE (Full Time Equivalent) for each teacher delivering VET courses.
- 2.8 Resourcing for VET industry specific professional learning should be allocated through the mechanism of the SBAR (School Budget Allocation Report) and be clearly visible as a line item enabling schools to appropriately plan and budget for this critical component of VET delivery.
- 2.9 Move to a single state-wide RTO (Registered Training Organisations) to streamline and standardise administrative, support, and compliance mechanisms. The SPC recognises the value of work underway to improve consistency between DoE RTOs

across the state and will continue to advocate for single state-wide RTO to streamline administrative, support, and compliance mechanisms.

### **3 Infrastructure and investment**

Since the cessation of the Commonwealth's Trade Training Centre program [2008-2015], there has been little significant investment in VET facilities in our public high schools. There is no systemic approach to refurbishment/improvement of existing VET facilities. There is no systemic approach to updating/replacing key VET related equipment. The parlous state of VET/TAS facilities represents a major challenge when considering quality provision that meets industry standards. Equitable delivery of quality SVET curriculum requires high quality facilities across all schools. The SPC recognises the critical role of TAS infrastructure in much VET provision.

#### ***NSW SPC Recommendations***

3.1 School Infrastructure NSW should establish a specialist VET design and construction entity, with responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of VET facilities in schools.

3.2 An immediate audit of school's VET/TAS facilities to consider the Health and Safety implications posed by spaces not fit for purpose and development of an action plan for the rectification of non-compliant spaces.

3.3. Prior to the establishment of new VET facilities and programs and their impact on the wider system, clear and transparent processes involving genuine consultation with relevant stakeholders should occur. Along with Infrastructure planning structures referencing VET facilities.

### **4. Partnership with TAFE NSW and other EVET providers**

The SPC recognises the importance of working in partnership and delivery with TAFE NSW and other providers to ensure the ongoing viability of the VET sector, to ensure schools' needs are met, built on genuine collaboration based on local context. Inclusive of work placement requirements.

SVET provision is supported within the SPC RG position for Infrastructure and Staffing.

#### ***NSW SPC Recommendations***

4.1 Establish a vibrant and well-funded TAFE, Training and Skills sector.

4.2 Overcome diverse challenges by offering a range of delivery models and implementation through consultation with SPC, particularly the VET Reference Group.

4.3 The establishment of clear operational guidelines which aim to identify and resolve operational challenges which have the potential to adversely affect the quality provision of EVET:

- I. Enrolments - The timing of and systems used for enrolment.
- II. Flexibility around the viability of classes including the curriculum surety in course offerings.
- III. Clear communication protocols between schools and TAFE regarding attendance, wellbeing, assessment, and HSC (Higher School Certificate) requirements.

IV. Explore and enhance opportunities for sharing of facilities and staff professional learning, including maintenance of industry currency.

4.4 Student Part-Time work: Consideration of part-time work as counting toward mandatory work placement. This will address the capacity of Industry to meet student workplace requirements, and lessen the burden for students and schools in the contemporary skill shortage.