



Skilling for the Green Transition

Reframing the role of Australia's VET system for climate and environmental action

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Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

**Let's make
change
that lasts**

Acknowledgment of Country

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways on which our organisation operates.

We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present.



Today's presentation



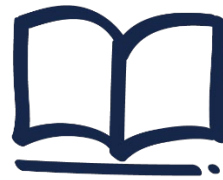
1. Outlining an opportunity for change



2. Our agenda for change



3. Building evidence



4. Developing better systems



The perspective of a social justice organisation with a mission to alleviate poverty



Who are we?

- BSL's Education, Skills & Training team sit within the organisation's Social Policy and Research Centre
- Research expertise, practice expertise, and a policy advocacy agenda
- Enable long-term outcomes for learners
- Systemic change agenda

Why an interest in the 'Green Transition'?

- A whole-of-economy effort
- Most occupations impacted
- VET will play a key role
- A key lever and opportunity to address disadvantage

What do we mean by the 'green transition'



The work of climate and environmental mitigation and adaptation which is already underway can be broadly categorised into three key streams

Net-Zero Emissions

The achievement of an overall balance between greenhouse gas emissions produced and greenhouse gas emissions taken out of the atmosphere through economic and social activity.

Circularity

The transition from a high-waste society and economy to one in which waste production is minimised through sharing, leasing, reusing, recycling. Potentially the decoupling of economic activity from the consumption of finite resources.

Climate Adaptation

The process of adjustment of policies and practices to actual or expected climatic and environmental change and its effects.

We have adopted the term 'Green Transition' when referring to the collective implementation of these three streams of effort.

Our research approach

- Understanding systems which perpetuate disadvantage
- Applied research and piloting to demonstrate new approaches
- Place-based and collaborative

THE SYSTEMIC CHANGE APPROACH

A systemic change response aims to advance equity and wellbeing by transforming ways of thinking, institutional structures and practices so that persons, communities and populations can expand their capability to pursue lives they value. (see [Mallett et al. 2022](#))

The applied systemic change methodology consists of four practice components

PRACTICE COMPONENTS

- 1 Create opportunities for change**
 - Build momentum
 - Establish legitimacy
- 2 Specify a change agenda**
 - Assemble a multiskilled team
 - Pursue a bold ambition together
- 3 Develop an adaptive evidence making agenda**
 - Identify problem conditions
 - Apply guiding ideas and frameworks
 - Establish learning loops
 - Develop impact measures
- 4 Develop better systems**
 - Design and iterate
 - Redistribute power
 - Build implementation capability

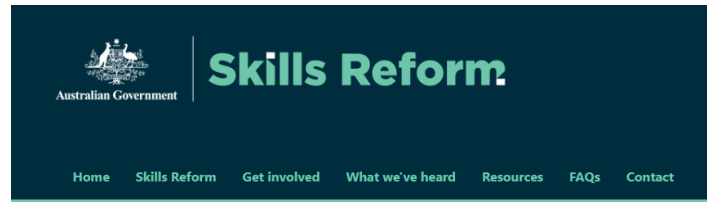
The opportunity



Seizing the opportunity



Strengthening Skills
Expert Review of Australia's Vocational Education and Training System
The Honourable Steven Joyce



New industry engagement arrangements - Industry Clusters

[Home](#) > [Consultations](#) > [Employment White Paper - Consultation](#)

Employment White Paper - Consultation



National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development (NASWD)

The National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development (NASWD) identifies the long-term objectives of the Australian, state and territory governments in the areas of skills and workforce development.



The opportunity landscape beyond VET



- The ambition of the recent Jobs and Skills Summit, including:
 - “delivering secure, well-paying jobs and strong, sustainable wages growth”,
 - “expanding employment opportunities for all Australians including the most disadvantaged”, and
 - “ensuring women have equal opportunities and equal pay”
- Treasury’s upcoming *Measuring What Matters* report
- Increasing government focus on place-based solutions
- Sustainability as a cross-cutting values through primary, secondary, and university education

**An agenda for
change**





VET Reform

Climate and
environmental
crises

Ambition for
equity and
long-term
outcomes

A
'meaningful'
and 'just'
transition

Linking the opportunities



A 'meaningful' transition?

What is it?

A transition in which the impact of each stream is maximised in order to prevent and alleviate the climatic and environmental damage which can be prevented, and adapt to the changes which are inevitable.

Why is it important?

- The distance between where we are, and where we need to be
- Continued climate change and environmental degradation will lead to disastrous consequences for all
- Those experiencing disadvantage will be disproportionately impacted by any degree of negative climatic and environmental change
- Some degree of change is already inevitable, only increasing the need for rapid, meaningful action



A 'just' transition?

What is it?

A transition which redresses existing inequalities and enablers of disadvantage, and does not create new systems of inequality

Why is it important?

- Australia is a signatory to the 2015 Paris agreement, which stipulates “the creation of decent work and quality jobs” as distinct component of environmental action
- A 2022 Monash University highlighted two key risks that come with transitions of this scale. The first is the entrenching of existing injustices. The second is generating new conditions of harm and inequality.
- ‘Justness’ a key element across many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals
- The ILO has noted that just because someone is engaged in ethical, green, or climate responsive employment does not mean that they are engaged in “decent” work
- Decline in wages for young people

Evidence making and frameworks



Planning our evidence making



Early research objectives		
Come to a shared understanding of the problem through research and consultation	Map the systems responsible for enabling workforce and skills development for the green transition	Identify the conditions which are holding the problems in place

Our research in practice



- Literature review encompassing
 - Academic literature
 - Forecasts and workforce estimates
 - Policy plans and roadmaps
 - International and domestic best-practice
- Ongoing collaboration with those at the front lines with responsibility for enabling educational outcomes in key sites where the transition is taking place
- Consultation with over forty stakeholders, including educators, industry, employers, government, academics, sustainability practitioners, and social service providers
- The convening of a system design workshop with stakeholders to identify the systemic barriers holding the problem in place, and to ideate solutions and early ambition
- Continued testing of our thinking with both expert and lay audiences

Net-zero emissions



Characteristics

- Largest focus and influence of each of the pillars of the transition
- Will rely heavily on VET sector
- Reliant on traditional workforce development approaches
- Will see some changes to workplace practices, in addition to increased workforce demand

Trajectory

- *Victorian Clean Energy Workforce Development Strategy 2023-2024*
- Queensland Low Emissions Agriculture Roadmap 2022–2032

Key problems identified

- Problem wider than just clean energy
- Concentration of opportunities in regional and remote Australia exacerbates problems of regional education and of regional workforce development
- Large, short-to-medium term infrastructure boom will give way to reduction in workforce need
- Large volume of entry-level roles
- Slow, centralised qualification development
- A strong focus on current, over future workforce needs
- Communities most impacted by changes often feel disconnected from workforce and educational planning for their region
- True scale of workforce need still unknown
- Many net-zero roadmaps lack accompanying skills plans

Circularity



Characteristics

- Large variance in definition and application across state governments
- Emerging from the shadow of net-zero
- Both circularity industry, and circular practices
- Smaller-scale job creation than net-zero, but potential for largest influence across occupations

Trajectory

- TAFE Queensland, Robina Campus
- Green Industries SA

Key problems identified

- Lack of shared definition limits understanding and action
 - Issue of sitting within clean energy
- Circular adaptation of occupational training often seen as luxury, and outside of scope of role of VET education and within the domain of private enterprise
- Lack of clarity in forecasting and government ambition
- Largely focused on reskilling rather than foundational training
- Slow, centralised qualification development

Climate adaptation



Characteristics

- Least developed skills response so far
- Calls for action from groups as diverse as:
 - International Labour Organization
 - United Workers Union
 - Royal Australian College of Physicians

Trajectory

- Queensland *Climate Adaptation Strategy 2017-2030*
- Victorian *Education and Training Climate Adaptation Plan*

Key problems identified

- Significant absence of clear forecasting, scope, and roadmaps
- Not yet on mainstream agenda of VET foundational training
- No clarity on where responsibility sits

Identifying the domains of change



Domain	Importance
Breadth and horizon of government ambition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sets the boundaries of financial, material, and intellectual investment in skills and training• Enables or disables adequate integration of skills and training into workforce development
The use of skills and training as workforce development lever	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determines timescales for outcomes• Determines metrics of success• Shapes status and purpose of VET education, which in turn informs curriculum
The vocational education system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shapes how curriculum is designed and delivered• Enables or disables institutional innovation and collaboration

**Developing better
systems**



Breadth and horizon of government ambition



Problem	Ideal Outcome
Narrow policy focus	Encompassing policy focus
Absence of skills planning in green transition policies	Integration of skills planning in green transition policies
Siloed effort	Cross-government design and investment

The use of skills and training as workforce development lever



Problem	Ideal Outcome
Short-term planning	Long-term planning
Underdeveloped understanding of the diversity of impact	Differentiated understand of impact on places and populations
Insufficient forecasting	Comprehensive forecasting
Assumptions about solution pathways	Skills as climate action

The vocational education system



Problem	Ideal Outcome
Existing weakness	A fit-for-purpose initial VET system
Centralised qualification design	Agile qualification design
Obsolete foundational training	'Green' foundational training

Systemic change methodology – next steps



Building our understanding of the problems and conditions, we also begin to *shape a shared ambition* for change, *build a team and activate champions*, and *socialise with government*.

So far this has been achieved through:

- Ongoing connection to stakeholders, including education providers, government, and social service and employment practitioners
- Building a coalition for action
- Identifying test sites for applied research and the piloting and demonstration of new approaches
- Submissions to government discussion papers, including
 - JSA Workplan
 - JSA Clean Energy Capacity Study

Thank you

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