



State Training Board

Growing apprenticeships and traineeships

Consultation Paper

August 2017

State Training Board industry consultations: Growing apprenticeships and traineeships

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Chairman's message



Western Australia's vocational education and training (VET) sector has a vital role in the economic, social and industrial development of our State. Our VET sector provides training and skills needed by trade, non-trade and para-professional workers for all of Western Australia's industries. Through careful planning and investment the VET sector can contribute to the Western Australian economy and avoid the implications of long-term skill shortages on the labour market.

The Labor Government's *Plan for Jobs* places emphasis on creating a vibrant and diversified economy with a broader range of industries and jobs for Western Australia. To diversify the economy we need greater effort in the areas of science, technology, manufacturing, tourism, services, education services, agriculture and other industries. The VET system can help deliver the skills needed for these vital industries.

Maximising the State's workforce participation rate requires people to be able to access and obtain the 'right skills' at the 'right time'. Training programs need to be relevant and linked to employment opportunities, particularly where there are skill shortages that would have historically relied on migration pathways. This requires broader training options for Western Australians, whether it is pre-employment training, full qualifications or skill sets. The training must be affordable, high quality and available through their local TAFE or private training provider.

The State Government, through the State Training Board, is seeking input from stakeholders, including employers that currently employ apprentices, those that have never engaged with the apprenticeship system and employers that no longer have apprentices or trainees. The State Training Board would welcome comment, including suggestions to facilitate the increased take up of apprenticeships and traineeships across Western Australia. The purpose of this consultation paper is to seek views from employers, industry representatives, unions and the training sector about how we can grow apprenticeships and traineeships to address the skill requirements of industry now and into the future.

I urge everyone with an interest in skilling Western Australia to attend one of our forums or make a written submission to the State Training Board.

By working together, the State can grow the proportion of people with post-school qualifications and provide opportunities for all Western Australians to participate in the labour market.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jim Walker'.

Jim Walker

CHAIR, STATE TRAINING BOARD

August 2017

State Training Board

The State Training Board is the peak industry training advisory body to the Minister for Education and Training in Western Australia. The State Training Board’s functions are set out in Part 3 of the *Vocational Education and Training Act 1996*.

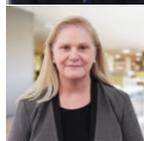
The Board’s role is to provide independent high level expert advice to the Minister on matters relating to VET including preparing policy which aims to improve the links between specific industry developments and VET to ensure optimum employment for Western Australians.

Our members come from a range of industries and are dedicated to training and skills development. The Board provides a direct link between industry and government. We are committed to fostering strong partnerships with industry, unions, peak bodies, and employers to identify training and skills needed by Western Australian industries for Western Australian jobs.

Our current members are:



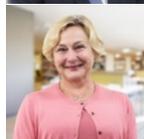
Mr Jim Walker, Chair



Ms Vanessa Davies



Mr Chris Hall, AM



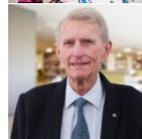
Dr Felicity Jefferies, MBBS, GAICD



Ms Jeanette Roberts



Professor Cobie Rudd, PhD, MPH, BHSC (N), GAICD



Mr Wayne Muller



Ms Meredith Hammat



Mr Ray Sputore

Industry training advisory bodies

The State Training Board recognises industry training advisory bodies from which the Board takes advice in relation to VET matters, including the establishment of apprenticeships and traineeships. The current industry training advisory bodies recognised by the State Training Board are:

- Community Services, Health and Education Training Council
- Construction Training Fund
- Financial, Administrative and Professional Services Training Council
- Food, Fibre and Timber Industries Training Council
- FutureNow: Creative and Leisure Industries Training Council
- Logistics Training Council
- Resource Industry Training Council
- Retail and Personal Services Training Council
- Utilities, Engineering, Electrical and Automotive Training Council
- Public Sector Commission
- WA Local Government Association

How can we grow apprenticeships and traineeships?

The Western Australian economy relies on industry to be productive, efficient and innovative to compete with domestic and international markets. Apprenticeships and traineeships are important to the State Government in supporting the continued growth and expansion of the Western Australian economy.

The State Government's *Plan for Jobs* places priority to the employment of apprentices and trainees on major infrastructure projects and manufacturing projects including METRONET and defence contract work. Non-trade and para-professional jobs including healthcare, community services, tourism, hospitality, education, agriculture, science and technology are equally important to the economic development of the State. Many of these industries have had low take-up of apprentices and trainees in the past and measures are needed to encourage an increase in the employment of apprentices and trainees.

National trends show a decline in the take-up and completion of apprenticeships and traineeships, and a move away from VET to higher education. Western Australia has experienced similar declines. The new National Partnership – *Skilling Australians Fund* looks to develop innovative solutions to drive the growth of apprenticeship and traineeship commencements, particularly for new entrants.

The State Training Board's *State Training Plan 2017–2020* equally supports measures to increase enrolments and completions in the more than 650 apprenticeships and traineeships available across almost every industry and ranging in AQF level from Certificate I to Advanced Diploma.

A key deliverable from the Plan is to increase the proportion of employers employing apprentices and trainees in Western Australia. We need an attractive business case for employers taking on an apprentice or trainee in Western Australia:

- For employers that have never engaged with the VET sector it will require extensive education and promotional campaigns about the benefits of the apprenticeship system.
- For existing and former employers it will be about addressing cost-pressures and reducing regulatory or administrative burdens.

The Board is interested in understanding what employers need to support the employment of apprentices and trainees.

- 1. What initiatives would encourage employers to employ an apprentice or trainee?**
- 2. How could we encourage industries that traditionally have not used an apprenticeship training model to consider employing apprentices or trainees?**

What are the barriers to apprenticeships and traineeships?

Identifying the common barriers faced by employers and apprentices will enable the design and provision of more targeted support. It is hoped that this will enhance the take-up and successful completion of apprenticeships and traineeships in Western Australia.

It is known that employers with diverse workforce arrangements, such as fly-in fly-out, shift work, seasonal and casual employees may find it difficult to engage with employment-based training. This may limit their options for upskilling their workforce.

The State Training Board recognises that the VET system is complex and can be difficult to navigate, particularly for employers who are new to the VET system. Understanding how the VET system works, the regulatory and administrative requirements, the paperwork and information needed can make hiring an apprentice onerous and confusing.

Many new employers are unsure about the level of supervision requirements, the suitable work that can be provided to an apprentice and the mentoring needed to support the apprentice through to successful completion.

Recruiting the right apprentice or trainee can be a challenge for many employers. Linking the right apprentice with the right employer requires good pre-employment screening and recruitment strategies. Many employers report difficulty finding the right candidate, with the pre-requisite skills, including literacy and numeracy skills and the 'right attitude'.

A positive relationship between the apprentice, the supervisor and the employer is a critical element of apprentice training and contributes to a successful outcome.

The cost of training remains a significant barrier for both employers and apprentices. Some apprentices view starting an apprenticeship as a serious financial risk. The rise in fees, the cost of tools and equipment and general living costs coupled with low wages can make an apprenticeship seem less attractive.

- 3. What barriers or impediments prevent employers from taking on an apprentice or trainee under a contract of training in Western Australia?**
- 4. What barriers are specific to rural and regional areas, and what can be done to address these barriers?**
- 5. What support structures are needed to support apprentices and trainees in Western Australia?**

Attracting young people into apprenticeships and traineeships

Young people must be given opportunities to become job-ready; if they are not job-ready they should be directed to courses or qualifications that will help them become job-ready. Young people need to understand the employment opportunities available in the labour market and how to develop the skills needed to succeed.

Good career guidance, linked with the labour market information and appropriate pathways, helps young people make informed decisions about further education and training. Young people need information about the world of work, the skills needed in the modern workplace and the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them, including both the academic and vocational pathways, and whether learning should be done in schools, colleges, universities or in the workplace.

Good career education must include multiple opportunities for young people to learn from employers about work and employment and the skills that are valued in the modern workplace. This can be achieved through a range of enrichment activities including visiting speakers, work experience, mentoring, career expos, career taster programs or formal employment-based training.

The lack of quality candidates reported by employers may be to blame on attitudes towards apprenticeships and traineeships. Unfortunately many parents, young people and career

guidance counsellors have outdated views about apprenticeships and traineeships. Many parents wrongly believe that a university pathway will guarantee employment and provide better outcomes for their children and will not consider a VET pathway or apprenticeship and traineeship as a good career choice. The research shows that VET graduates have good job prospects, earn wages comparable, if not exceeding that of university graduates. Raising the public's awareness of apprenticeships and traineeships may be the answer.

6. How can we make apprenticeships and traineeships more attractive to young people, their parents or career guidance counsellors?

School-based apprenticeships and traineeships

Strong links between schools and local employers are very important means of introducing young people to the world of work. A school-based apprenticeship or traineeship enables a secondary student, typically year 11 or 12, to work for an employer and train towards a recognised qualification while completing high school.

Depending on the qualification and when the young person commences, many students can complete a school-based traineeship while at school. A school-based apprenticeship provides a head start into a full time or part time apprenticeship and career. Young people may complete up to a third of an apprenticeship while at school. After school they can convert to a full time arrangement.

Despite the benefits to students, the take up in Western Australia is relatively low compared with other jurisdictions. In 2016 only 3.6% of secondary students entered a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship with an employer. Understanding the reasons for the low take-up of school based apprenticeships and traineeships may help identify programs or solutions to encourage employers to engage with the school sector.

7. Is there a need for school-based apprenticeships and traineeships in your industry?

8. What might prevent employers from considering a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship? How can this be improved?

Career taster programs

Career taster programs may be a way of educating young people about the job possibilities available through an apprenticeship or traineeship. Career taster programs provide accredited training in entry-level units from a range of related occupations, combined with authentic work experience. Career taster courses are designed for students who are interested in working in a particular industry but don't know which occupation to aim for.

The goal of these courses is to help students make an informed career choice and take the first step in that career. Employers benefit from these courses because graduates are motivated to succeed in their chosen career, have some basic industry skills, and have a basic familiarity with workplace conditions.

Career taster courses are intended to be suitable for all student cohorts, including senior school students (year 11 or 12), if endorsed by the school sector. New courses may need to be developed and accredited, to ensure that they articulate directly into a range of apprenticeships and traineeships in the relevant industry. An example of a successful career taster course is the 52825WA Certificate II in Building and Construction (Pathway-Para Professional), developed by the Construction Training Council and industry partners. The course provides a pathway into a range of off-site construction support roles: draftsman, pre-start consultant, contract administrator, scheduler, estimator and designer.

9. Would career taster courses be suitable for your industry? What would ensure a successful outcome?

10. How could employers be recruited for work experience placements?

Pathways to an apprenticeship or traineeship

Pre-apprenticeships

The pre-apprenticeship program is funded by the State Government and provides additional funding for training providers to coordinate appropriate work placements. Program business rules specify the time required for a work placement with an employer and the training can only be delivered by a provider that is also registered to deliver the related apprenticeship.

Pre-apprenticeships can be effective tools in providing young people with the foundation skills needed for successful completion of an apprenticeship. Pre-apprenticeship programs have been a feature of the Western Australian VET system for many years and provide young people, particularly school students, with the opportunity to develop foundation skills and test their suitability and interest in a particular trade or family of trades as well as acquiring the technical skills that will make them more attractive to prospective employers.

Some employers actively recruit from pre-apprenticeship programs, and so they can be a good way for young people to break into the industry.

11. Are pre-apprenticeships still a valued pathway to an apprenticeship?

Pre-traineeships

Pre-traineeships can provide an introduction to employment-based training for employers and students who are unfamiliar with the system. Employers who have a positive experience with pre-traineeships may be more motivated to enter into contracts of training for traineeships. This can engage a wider range of employers with the vocational education and training system. Pre-traineeships will also give employers a pool of screened and pre-trained candidates to choose from.

For students, pre-traineeships act as an orientation program for those entering employment-based training for the first time. They will establish a relationship with a training provider and learn basic skills relevant to their intended profession. Pre-traineeships allow students to sample an occupation to ensure that it suits them. They can make an informed choice about continuing on to a traineeship in the industry, which will benefit their employers and themselves.

Any Western Australian pre-traineeship program would be modelled on the established Western Australian pre-apprenticeship program and will service occupations not covered by that program. This could be an attractive pathway for para-professional occupations including healthcare, social assistance, allied health, business and tourism.

12. Is the concept of a pre-traineeship suitable for your industry? What would ensure the best outcomes?

Structured pathways

Structuring training around the specific needs of industry and business can help reduce waste of time and money. Structured pathways that are recognised by industry may enable greater

flexibility across different occupational groups within one industry as entry-level steps can be used to provide core units of competency that are common across multiple qualifications.

A structured pathway uses entry-level traineeships as a first step on a pathway into higher traineeships and apprenticeships. Each 'step' represents both an entry and exit point providing greater flexibility for both the employer and the trainee. The trainee would receive a certificate at the end of each 'step' as a formal recognition of the training that has been completed. Each step progresses towards a higher level traineeship or apprenticeship.

It would be expected that a structured pathway would help with non-completions. It may also be beneficial during periods of economic uncertainty where a four-year apprenticeship might be too much of a risk for the business. Each 'step' would be six to 12 months in duration.

For some cohorts of students a structured pathway may be beneficial as it provides employment and training combined whilst progressing towards a higher level traineeship or apprenticeship. This may provide a flexible way for under-represented groups to engage with employment-based training.

This structured pathway may be improved and expanded, to improve the flexibility of the training system. This would ensure that individuals and employers can complete training at a level that meets their needs and their capacity. Where an apprenticeship is cancelled, this approach may help the apprentice to re-engage with training in the future to complete their apprenticeship.

13. Would lower-level traineeships that articulate into an apprenticeship be useful for your industry?

Mature-aged apprenticeships and traineeships

In a rapidly changing world where skill requirements can vary through a person's working life, formal training should never be 'set and forget'. Participation in training will only increase if individuals can access flexible, innovative and affordable training regardless of where they live, their abilities, needs or career aspirations. We must promote the progression of individuals, so that they are not locked into entry level jobs but can instead enhance their skills, contribute more in the workplace, increase their earning potential and support improvements in productivity.

Mature-aged or adult apprenticeships and traineeships may be the answer for some people and industries, particularly those impacted by technology or innovative changes. Apprenticeships and traineeships are primarily targeted at young people under the age of 21.

Overall participation in VET is relatively high among 21–24 year olds, suggesting that there is room to grow apprenticeship commencements among this cohort. However, the cost of employing these apprentices may be a barrier for some employers, especially in the first years of an apprenticeship while the apprentice is less productive. For example, if the apprentice is employed under a Modern Award, the employer is required to pay the apprentice's training fees and any travel and accommodation costs. Reducing the overall cost of apprentices aged over 21 years may encourage a wider range of employers to engage with training and provide more opportunities for this age group to participate in apprenticeships.

14. Would your industry benefit from using more mature-aged apprentices?

15. What would help employers take on mature-aged apprentices?

Higher level apprenticeships and traineeships

As Western Australia shifts to a more diversified and knowledge-based economy, higher level skills at Certificate IV and above will be needed to gain employment.

The State Training Board encourages collaboration with industry and the VET and university sectors to address priorities and gaps in the provision of higher level qualifications such as Certificate IV, VET diplomas and advanced diplomas as well as university degrees. It has been suggested that articulation pathways should not only be designed to suit students articulating from VET backgrounds to universities, but equally for university students/graduates to VET courses. For some university students, particularly those undertaking generalist undergraduate degrees, higher level apprenticeships and traineeships could provide a secure way to employment in a particular industry. Employers, too, have the benefit of students well prepared in literacy, numeracy, analytical and conceptual skills, as well as the specific skills required in the job.

Higher level apprenticeships and traineeships can progress an employee's career by increasing their occupation-specific skills or helping them move into supervisory roles. In some industries they also provide an entry point for suitable candidates.

Currently, there are 190 higher-level apprenticeships and traineeships, at Certificate IV to Advanced Diploma level. However, commencements are generally relatively low, compared to institution-based delivery of the same qualifications. For example, the Diploma of Engineering – Technical had 325 students who completed the qualification in a classroom environment compared with only four who completed it through the traineeship.

16. Is there a need for higher level apprenticeships and traineeships in your industry? What might prevent people undertaking these? How can this be improved?

Employer Consultations

Perth metropolitan area

Perth CBD – Friday, 18 August 2017

10:30 am (registration), 11:00 am to 2:00 pm (lunch included)

Mercure Hotel, 10 Irwin Street Perth WA 6000

Perth CBD – Monday 21 August 2017

8:30 am (registration), 9:00 am to 11:00 am (morning tea included)

Mercure Hotel, 10 Irwin Street Perth WA 6000

Perth CBD – Monday 21 August 2017

12:30 pm (registration), 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm (afternoon tea included)

Mercure Hotel, 10 Irwin Street Perth WA 6000

Other consultation sessions will be held in and around the Perth metropolitan area and details will be published on the State Training Board website at stb.wa.gov.au.

Regional consultations

The geographical size of Western Australia presents challenges for the VET sector and for government more generally. Regional and rural communities have different needs to the Perth metropolitan area and need flexible training solutions that take into account the fluctuations resulting from seasonal work or servicing the large resource companies with fly-in and fly-out workforce. It also needs to take into consideration the needs of local Aboriginal communities.

The Chair and members of the State Training Board will be travelling to regional Western Australia from October 2017 to consult on the issues discussed in this paper.

Dates for regional consultations will be published on the State Training Board website at stb.wa.gov.au as soon as they become available.

Written submissions

Your views on the issues highlighted in this paper and other matters relevant to the *Plan for Jobs* or the State Training Board's *State Training Plan 2017–2020* are encouraged.

Your written submissions will be used by the State Training Board to formulate advice to the Minister for Education and Training.

Please email your response to the questions posed in this paper or comments to ostb@dtwd.wa.gov.au by close of business on **Friday, 15 September 2017**.



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