

**'Future Proof' Protecting Australians through education and skills
Business Council of Australia**

Western Australian Department of Education response

OVERALL TERTIARY SYSTEM

1. What is your view on the proposal to move to a tertiary model and why?

The Western Australian Department of Education (the Department) concurs with the Business Council's belief that all Australians should be able to access education and skill development throughout their lives.

A tertiary model which includes the higher education (HE) and vocational education and training (VET) sectors within a single model would assist in changing community perceptions of VET and enhance the willingness of students to consider the full range of available study options that best suit their aspirations and learning needs.

2. If Australia were to adopt a tertiary model, do you think the proposed five elements of the tertiary system (structure, funding, information, governance and lifelong learning) are appropriate, and why?

COMPONENT ONE: STRUCTURE

3. Do you agree it is important that the two sectors (VET and HE) maintain a unique identity?

The tertiary education sector must meet people's needs at all points on their learning journey. If the stigma of VET being regarded as a "second class citizen" is to be broken down, the tertiary education sector should be viewed as providing a continuum of educational opportunities. Although VET and HE may cater for people at different points on their learning journey, the function of both should be informed by industry needs. It is recognised that universities also provide further opportunities for research and academic inquiry that benefit the learner and society.

4. The continuation of sector specific standards and regulators are designed to support each sector maintaining their unique identify. Do you think any other mechanisms are needed to ensure each sector maintains their own identify?

5. Do you think the proposed new institution (the body that will contract manage funding the LSAs and the market information platform) needs to differentiate between the two sectors?

The Department considers a single, sector neutral funding model to be a concept worthy of further investigation.

COMPONENT TWO: FUNDING

6. What is your view on the proposal to create a Lifelong Skills Account, and why?

The Department considers that the creation of a Lifelong Skills Account (LSA) merits further exploration, as a way of encouraging learners to access education and participate in lifelong learning.

It is unclear in the discussion paper how current workforce participants with qualifications would fit into the LSA subsidy and loan entitlement model.

7. Do you support the principle that the contribution by learners should be based on the cost of the learning and the ratio of public and private benefit, and why?

8. Do you think there should be a cap on the subsidy and/or the income contingent loans? If so, how should the cap be determined?

9. Do you support the establishment of a separate fund that businesses can access to develop their workforce, and why?

Business needs to inform primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors of their workforce skill development needs.

COMPONENT THREE: SINGLE PLATFORM FOR MARKET INFORMATION

10. Market information has been an issue in tertiary education for at least a decade. What are the barriers to building a single platform, and how can they be overcome?

The Department provides in-principle support for building a single platform for market information to assist potential learners' decision making processes.

The myfuture website, developed by Education Services Australia, could become such a platform. It already contains significant content regarding:

- *self-exploration;*
- *career planning and pathways;*
- *training and higher education options;*
- *occupation opportunities and industry information; and*
- *transition management.*

11. What new data sets will need to be created, and what current data sets will need to be accessed or linked?

The starting point for a single platform should be the integration of data from existing sources.

The myfuture website contains considerable data regarding education, training and occupations, much of which could be valuable in this context.

12. What are your views on the Business Council's proposed approach for a learner's decision-making process?

Learner's decision making process:

1. What to study?

This section needs to be more significantly informed by career development practices that empower the learner to navigate the range of available options.

2. Where to study?

The quality of courses and course delivery should be incorporated into the learner considerations. This could include an option for people who have undertaken study at an institution to provide reviews.

COMPONENT FOUR: AGREE A SHARED GOVERNANCE MODEL

13. Do you agree with the proposed split of funding responsibilities between the different levels of government? If not, what alternative approach would you propose and why?

14. There are some concerns that hard lines between levels of government in funding responsibilities can lead to perverse behaviour. If you have these concerns, what alternate model would you propose?

15. Do you support State governments providing base funding to TAFES to ensure their sustainability? If not, what approach would you propose to ensure sustainability?

16. What are your views on the proposed methodology that determine the subsidy rates (see proposal six)?

17. The governance model has been designed with safeguards to prevent cost-shifting between levels of government (see proposals five and six), as well as cost blow outs. These include:

17.1 Proposing that each level of government commit to maintaining current funding levels for 10 years, with a review at five years

17.2 Proposing that when a government transfers funds to the new institution, the new institution will quarantine the funds for each jurisdiction's use

17.3 Proposing that responsibility for qualifications eligible for ICS rests with the same level of government that fund ICLs (the Commonwealth)

17.4 Proposing that the government that funds the qualification also sets the subsidy provided

17.5 Proposing that governments will determine the level of fee deregulation for each student cohort, including whether providers will be permitted to charge above cost-reflective price and margin

17.6 The ongoing monitoring of all funding across the two sectors.

Are these sufficient safeguards? If not, what additional safeguards would you propose?

18. The Business Council has proposed the creation of a tertiary system funding and marketing information institution to enact the decisions of government and a range of other responsibilities.

18.1 Do you support the new institution being a not-for-profit company? If not, what governance would you propose and why would it be preferable?

18.2 Who should the Board be chaired by – industry or government, and why?

18.3 Should the Board have any policy responsibility, and why?

COMPONENT FIVE: CREATE A CULTURE OF LIFELONG LEARNING

The broad, general education provided by Western Australian public schools prepares students for opportunities and challenges of the future economy, as well as supporting their development as active and responsible citizens. Schools recognise that successful participants in the 21st century world of work will need to be flexible and adaptable, with a willingness to continue building their knowledge skills and capabilities throughout their working lives.

19. What are your views on adopting a more modularised approach to skill development to support lifelong learning?

The Department's approach to career development empowers students to navigate study, work and life options through self-exploration, career learning and action planning. This includes the identification of knowledge, skills and capabilities that learners will require to enhance their employment options or improve practice in current roles.

The Department considers a more modularised approach to skill development worthy of further exploration, as a way of assisting workers to upskill and reskill in a rapidly changing world of work.

20. Do you support established workers being able to use their LSAs to fund self-constructed qualifications?

The ability to utilise LSAs to fund flexible learning would support developing a culture of lifelong learning.

21. What role do you think business should play in creating a culture of lifelong learning?

All stakeholders have a part to play in creating a culture of lifelong learning. Identification of skill sets workers require, flexible work structures that allow for study, financial assistance and incentives for learning could contribute to the development of a culture of lifelong learning.