

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY WRITTEN QUESTION
Number 123

EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

- Q1. As money is allocated to Charles Darwin University (CDU) and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) to deliver training to Territorians, what processes are in place to ensure Territorians are receiving the services that are publicly funded including recurrent funding, apprenticeships, traineeships, skills and qualifications?**

The Department of Education and Training enters into resource agreements with CDU and BIITE annually. These agreements contain stringent reporting requirements that enable the Department to ensure that publicly funded training has been delivered to Territorians as set out in the agreements, and that delivery targets have been met.

Additionally, both CDU and BIITE are audited by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research on an annual basis on the quality of the data they provide on their training and related administrative activities. Both organisations also undergo an annual external financial audit to ensure public funding is appropriately expended.

- Q2. As the State Training Authority (STA) is embedded in the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the STA is another Government agency, where is the transparency in this process?**

The Department of Education and Training is the State Training Authority for the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority (ie the State Training Authority) is established under legislation administered by the Department of Education and Training.

The Department of Education and Training is recognised as the State Training Authority at the national level.

- Q3. Why are training and training infrastructure costs not subject to normal government procurement processes?**

The Department of Education and Training has been given an exemption from normal government procurement processes for the purchase of training delivery services and the allocation of recurrent and targeted program funding for vocational education and training infrastructure.

This is consistent with the provision of public funding to public providers in other jurisdictions.

Q4. What is the methodology used to determine the funding needs of an RTO and the Northern Territory Government funds allocated towards each need?

The recurrent funding provided primarily to CDU and BIITE for the delivery of vocational education and training is allocated based on negotiations with the individual providers. The annual training delivery profile for each institution is agreed as a result of these negotiations. Funding under User Choice (for apprenticeship/traineeship off-the-job training delivery) and other programs is allocated based on submissions received from registered training organisations which are assessed against set criteria including industry need and government priorities.

Q5. What method does DET employ to ensure that money provided to the public registered training organisations (RTOs) is used for training?

The Department of Education and Training enters into resource agreements with CDU and BIITE annually. These agreements identify what the funding must be used for, and also establish the training delivery targets and contractual responsibilities to be met to trigger the payment of public funds.

Registered training organisations are required to provide quarterly reports on performance milestones achieved against training delivery targets set in their resource agreements. Payments are made on performance milestones being met with an end of the year acquittal process for all resource agreements.

Q6. What is the DET process used to ensure participants have obtained employment upon completion of their training in pre-employment programs?

While all pre-employment programs have the aim of participants gaining employment on completion, 100% employment is not always achievable. Pre-employment programs are funded based on industry need and available job opportunities, and organisations that receive the funding are required to report on employment outcomes achieved.

Q7. What measure is applied to ensure employment outcomes following training are reasonable compared to the training dollar input?

While employment outcomes are not measured at the local level, student outcomes surveys are conducted at a national level by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. Training dollar inputs are not compared to employment outcomes but are aligned to a projected hourly cost of training delivery for qualifications aligned to discrete industry sectors.

A substantial number of Territorians undertaking nationally recognised training are already in employment and access vocational education and training for re-skilling/up-skilling purposes, career change aspirations or personal development. This is consistent with participation in nationally recognised training in all jurisdictions in Australia.

- Q8. National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) data represents annual training delivered and notes qualifications but not necessarily skill sets so how does DET know that the money expended on training is reflective of training delivered?**

Any registered training organisation that receives public funding is required to submit Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information System Standards (AVETMISS) compliant data annually to the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training. This data reports on training delivered at qualification, skill set and individual unit of competency level. The requirement to report AVETMISS data is contained in the resource agreement signed by the registered training organisation and is a key element of the Australian Quality Training Framework for registered training organisations accessing public funding. The Department of Education and Training forwards AVETMISS data to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research annually.

- Q9. What methodology is used to ensure RTOs that deliver training in the Northern Territory meet the minimum standards of industry as opposed to training packages?**

Registered training organisations deliver training based on qualifications contained in training packages. Training packages are developed by industry for industry, and set the minimum training and assessment standards required by industry, therefore ensuring registered training organisations deliver to industry standards.

Industry or individual employers can approach the Department of Education and Training and seek accreditation of a training course not covered by training packages.

- Q10. What methods are used to ensure that what is outlined within the training package is delivered by the RTOs?**

The AVETMISS data submitted by registered training organisations is checked to ensure they are delivering training and assessment in line with nationally endorsed training packages or locally accredited courses. Submission of AVETMISS compliant data triggers the allocation of funding as per their resource agreement.

Re-registration, monitoring or compliance audits also check that nationally recognised training and assessment meets the requirements of training packages and/or accredited courses.

- Q11. What is the current allocation applied to the quality and regulatory unit of DET to monitor and supervise compliance with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF 2007)?**

The Quality and Regulatory Unit receives funding to support six staff plus an additional annual allocation of approximately \$220,000 for operational and audit costs.

Q12. What is DET's risk management strategy and audit framework to ensure that RTOs registered to deliver training in the Northern Territory are complying with AQTF 2007?

A training provider must be fully compliant with AQTF2007 to be registered. Training providers are audited against the AQTF2007 at initial registration, approximately twelve to eighteen months later for post-initial registration, then again for re-registration within five years. Registered training organisations are also subject to monitoring audits throughout their registration period, are audited on application to extend their scope, on receipt of a complaint or in response to a national strategic industry audit. Registered training organisations must be able to show evidence they remain compliant with AQTF2007 to maintain their registration status.

Q13. Is AQTF 2007 effective in ensuring that RTOs deliver competency based training to Territorians, how is it measured and is it more effective that the RTO remains registered?

AQTF2007 is the national standard registered training organisations must meet to deliver nationally recognised (and therefore competency based) training. To deliver nationally recognised training an organisation must be registered under the *Northern Territory Employment and Training Act* or the equivalent in another jurisdiction. If an organisation is not registered they are not allowed to deliver nationally recognised training and cannot access public funding.

The National Quality Council has responsibility for reviewing and amending the AQTF and the Department of Education and Training has, and will continue to input into these reviews.

Q14. How does the AQTF 2007 ensure that the monies paid to the RTOs by industry for training and the monies paid by the Government to the RTOs for training is not the same money and is AQTF 2007 the best mechanism to ensure transparency?

The AQTF2007 is not the mechanism by which registered training organisations are monitored regarding funding. The AQTF2007 *Conditions of Registration* require registered training organisations to protect fees paid in advance by students.

The Department of Education and Training provides funding to registered training organisations through resource agreements, and it is these agreements and the provision of AVETMISS compliant data that establishes a mechanism by which funding is monitored and payments triggered. These agreements require the registered training organisations to report all training activity, irrelevant of the funding source.

Industry may if they wish, supplement the funding provided by government for industry specific training programs.

Q15. What risk management strategies does DET have in place to ensure that the training delivered through Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS), apprenticeships, traineeships and competency based training meets industry standards?

All nationally recognised training that is delivered is based on national training package qualifications or accredited courses. Training packages are developed for industry by industry, therefore ensuring training meets industry standards and requirements. Accredited courses must meet an industry need and have industry input in the development process.

The Department of Education and Training provides about \$1million in funding to support the operation of six industry Training Advisory Councils and regularly engages with these bodies and peak industry organisations on issues related to vocational education and training in the Northern Territory including the needs of industry.

Q16. What methodology and KPIs does the Northern Territory Government, and in particular DET, utilise to monitor the employment pathway of students undertaking VETiS programs in gaining employment?

In the past VET in Schools programs were made available as a pathway, not necessarily to solely assist students in gaining employment. VET in Schools programs provide students with different post-school options including further training, employment, higher education or a combination of such.

Increasingly the VET in Schools programs delivered are targeting employment opportunities. The Department of Education and Training is developing a method for post-school destination tracking of school leavers for possible implementation in late 2010/early 2011.

Q17. What number of students that undertook VETiS in 2008 gained employment or moved onto higher training?

The employment and/or training destination of students who participated in VET in Schools programs was not directly measured in 2008.

Q18. What central information identifies the funding models and funding programs available for training in the Northern Territory and how does industry access this comprehensive information?

Information on the model applied to the funding of training delivery and on the different funding programs available can be found on the Department of Education and Training's internet website. A summary information sheet on programs available is also available on the website.

Training Advisory Councils have a role in disseminating this information and registered training organisations are advised of this in their resource agreements.

Q19. Is there a Northern Territory Government policy or directive that precludes the funding of non public or interstate RTOs over the two public providers – CDU and BIITE and if not, what is the DET process to inform all RTOs training in the NT about funding models and how is this accessed and managed?

There is no policy that prevents funding being given to non-public or interstate registered training organisations. While recurrent funding is primarily provided to CDU and BIITE, most other funding sources are available to all registered training organisations on a competitive basis or through submission.

For example, a number of private and interstate registered training organisations are funded under User Choice to deliver apprenticeship and traineeship training. Information on funding models and programs is available on the Department of Education and Training's internet website.

Q20. How does DET ensure that when training is purchased, that the RTO workforce has appropriate qualifications, current competency, the requisite skills and knowledge to deliver the training at the industry level?

A registered training organisation must have scope under the Australian Quality Training Framework to deliver a qualification or qualifications before funding can be provided for delivery of that qualification/s. The approval process for registration and scope includes ensuring that personnel delivering accredited training for a registered training organisation have the appropriate training and assessment qualifications and vocational knowledge and experience to deliver the qualification.

Q21. Does DET rely on a process of compliance audit when determining appropriateness of the training that is delivered and how often is such an audit undertaken?

Organisations must be fully compliant with AQTF2007 to be registered and approved to deliver training. Organisations are audited against the AQTF2007 at initial registration, again twelve to eighteen months later post-initial registration, then again for re-registration within five years. Registered training organisations are also subject to monitoring audits throughout their registration period, are audited on application to extend their scope, on receipt of a complaint or in response to a national strategic industry audit. During audit the training and assessment strategies and assessment processes of a registered training organisation are checked for consistency with the qualification requirements.

Any complaint lodged against a registered training organisation regarding inappropriate training delivery or assessment is investigated by the Department of Education and Training and if required, may lead to the instigation of an independent audit.

Q22. Does DET ensure that the training that is delivered meets industry needs and if so by what method?

The Department of Education and Training gathers information on the training needs of industry through various mechanisms including direct consultation with government, industry and community organisations and associations. The Northern Territory Occupational Shortage List is also used to inform funding allocations for training delivery, as are skill profile needs aligned to major projects and projected labour market demands when decisions are made about the purchase of training delivery.

The Department of Education and Training provides about \$1 million in funding to support the operation of six industry Training Advisory Councils and regularly engages with these bodies and peak industry organisations, other Northern Territory and Australian Government agencies and community organisations to identify current and future training needs as well as gain feedback on performance of the vocational education and training sector.

Q23. Does DET compare the dollar input to the training purchased?

The Department of Education and Training purchases training based on a funding model that applies a set dollar amount for every hour of training delivered in each discrete industry sector. The dollar input based on the funding model is the maximum amount the Department will pay for the training purchased. The Department only funds for hours of training actually delivered and reported under AVETMISS.

Q24. How does DET track the employment of the training participant?

The Department of Education and Training does not track the employment of training participants. Student outcomes surveys are conducted at a national level by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

A substantial number of Territorians undertaking nationally recognised training are already in employment and access vocational education and training for re-skilling/up-skilling purposes, career change aspirations or personal development. This is consistent with participation in nationally recognised training in all jurisdictions in Australia.

Q25. Does DET staff have the requisite skills and qualifications to ensure that the delivery of skills and qualifications to industry meets industry standards?

Senior staff in the Training and Higher Education Division of the Department of Education and Training have substantial experience in the vocational education and training sector. Some staff possess a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment qualification, have a trade/industry background or training experience or have undertaken other relevant professional development including auditor training.

The Department outsources the audit function to experienced auditors and one of the tender requirements is that the auditors have the relevant skills and

qualifications to be able to make a judgement that the training is being delivered to the requirements of the qualification.

Where appropriate, a representative from licensing bodies and/or industry regulators and other appropriately skilled industry people nominated by the Training Advisory Councils participate in audits of registered training organisations.

Q26. Since 2005, how many RTOs in the Northern Territory have been suspended for non-compliance and how does this compare to other States and Territories?

Since 2005 four registered training organisations have had their registration status suspended due to non-compliance. Of the four, one is still under suspension, one has had their registration status cancelled and two had their suspension lifted once compliance was achieved. Comparisons are not made with other states and territories. Some other registered training organisations have had suspensions applied to the delivery of certain qualifications only, with these being lifted only on the provision of evidence that non-compliance has been resolved.

Q27. Does the Northern Territory have any non-compliance with AQTF 2007 issues?

The Northern Territory was involved in the development and implementation of the AQTF 2007. The Department of Education and Training has the capacity to raise issues of concern with the AQTF through the National Quality Council.

Q28. Is the service delivered by Northern Territory funded RTOs compared with interstate RTOs that deliver the same qualifications?

All registered training organisations in Australia are audited against and must be compliant with the AQTF standards. Many interstate registered training organisations are funded to deliver training in the Northern Territory. There is no direct comparison with registered training organisations delivering in other jurisdictions.

Q29. Why is the purchase of training through the public RTOs – CDU and BIITE – not subjected to the Northern Territory Government's procurement guidelines as all other services purchased by government are?

The Department of Education and Training has been given an exemption from normal government procurement processes for the purchase of training delivery services. This is no different to arrangements in place for the allocation of recurrent funding to TAFE institutions for training delivery in other jurisdictions.

Q30. What does the Northern Territory Government, through DET, do to engage with industry to ensure that the training funded through DET meets the needs and expectations of industry?

The Department of Education and Training funds six Training Advisory Councils to provide advice and intelligence on industry training needs, promote the benefits of nationally recognised training and report on issues of concern as well as what is working well. The Department is also in regular contact with peak industry organisations and associations on how vocational education and training is meeting current needs and how best to respond to future demands/priorities.

In the past twelve months the Department of Education and Training has worked in partnership with a number of peak industry organisations in the development and funding of pre-employment, up-skilling and Indigenous responsive training programs.

Q31. How does DET ensure advice offered by teachers is current and of benefit to all career aspirations in the vocational education and training sector?

Every senior secondary school has a careers adviser or access to one. Professional development is made available to careers advisers and school vocational education and training coordinators on the range of training and careers options available for students. The Department of Education and Training holds an annual careers adviser forum, the first day of which is dedicated to engagement with industry and training providers on issues relevant to the transition of students from school to work, further training or higher education.

The Department recently funded sixty school careers advisers and vocational education and training coordinators to undertake the Certificate IV in Career Development.