

Need for flexibility in vocational education

Heidi Bendikson - Thu, 12 Sep 2024



Vocational education reform needs to allow for Australian training programmes and trainers to be recognised by New Zealand qualifications, MinEx says.

In its submission on the proposed vocational education and training system redesign, the organisation opposes any restraint on new organisations offering industry training.

A number of organisations in their sector use Australian trainers and training programmes due to their suitability to mining and quarrying operations, the submission says.

While the practice improves workers' skills, they are denied recognition within the NZQA system.

“We see opportunities for these providers to be accredited in New Zealand and have their programmes mapped to New Zealand qualifications. This will enhance the calibre of training offered to our sector.”

MinEx adds that it is critical that training delivery is flexible, as mining, quarrying and tunnelling operations are often located in remote parts of the country.

“While this will depend on course content, the regions are better suited to onsite and e-learning options rather than having to travel long distances to attend classroom-based training.”

The Ministry of Education has been seeking [feedback](#) on proposals for New Zealand’s vocational education system, including options for an industry-led system for standard-setting and industry training and funding changes.

Submissions on the proposed reform close today.

Flexibility

MinEx chief executive Wayne Scott says Australian training allows for training on site and either internal or external assessment recognised to meet the requirements of the unit standard.

“In New Zealand, you can’t do that, which is silly really.”

He adds that it has not always been that way. New Zealand moved away from that work-based training model with the introduction of Industry Training Organisations – ITOs.

The model also placed constraints on which trainers were able to teach unit standards.

“There was a funding incentive within previous models for people to keep things to themselves. That led to competitive unit standard development and ITOs competing with each other,” Scott says.

As a result, learners would end up having to do multiple unit standards for the same thing in different industries.”

MinEx supports the allocation of dedicated funding for standards setting.

Industry-led system

The redesign proposal document suggests two options for establishing an industry-led standards setting system.

Either establish a small number of industry boards similar to the previous ITOs, or replace Workplace Development Councils with a small number of industry-specific standard-setting bodies.

MinEx supports the second option which it says enables choice for employers and students by continuing to allow any provider to offer industry training programmes.

It says that approach will avoid the potential conflicts of interest that can arise when standard setting functions are connected to the arrangement of training.

NZQA, Tertiary Education Commission

While neither NZQA nor the Tertiary Education Commission – TEC – is included in the reform proposal, MinEx suggests their performance in supporting industry-led vocational education should be reviewed.

Scott tells *Inside Resources* that he thinks it's bizarre that two reforms of vocational education in the past five years have not looked at the two institutions that run the system.

"Things take an eternity to get approved through those organisations. We don't know how funding decisions are necessarily made. So, I'm quite surprised that those two organisations weren't included in the review."

MinEx notes that the sector is continually changing, which will require learning programmes to be continually updated.

It also anticipates growth in the use of micro-credentials, saying it's important that those approvals are not held up by NZQA or TEC.

"Some approvals have been delayed in the past and need to be sped up under the proposed VET system."

Micro-credentials

Scott says MinEx has been looking at grouping unit standards at competency level for micro-credentials.

"They give recognition that you have achieved something at every level."

The micro-credentials can be stacked, so you might need four or five of them to get a certificate of competency and a further eight or nine to get a full qualification.

"But you just work at it through your working career if you like, but you get recognition that you have achieved something at each level."

Inside Resources has previously [reported](#) on concerns that some workers were either not enrolling in or dropping out of certificate and diploma courses because they didn't want to do more than was necessary to achieve a certificate of competency.

INSIDE RESOURCES

MINING AND QUARRYING INTELLIGENCE

Thursday 30 June, 2022

Former chief inspector of extractives Mark Pizey said at the time that the situation was a lost opportunity to improve recognition of, and respect for, the industry.”