

Submission on the draft Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) released for targeted sector consultation

September 2025

MinEx

MinEx, as the peak health and safety council for the mining, quarrying, and tunnelling sectors—including its active representation for vocational education—has a strong stake in any change to the vocational education landscape.

The draft TES and associated reforms signal a significant “reset” of roles, responsibilities, and structures in the sector, and we make the following submissions in relation to the draft Tertiary Education Strategy (TES) released for targeted sector consultation.

Key points

- We support changes to vocational education and training that will enable more providers to move into work-based learning and develop new apprenticeship and traineeship programmes.
- We support more agile and responsive delivery models to support upskilling and retraining, which are critical for sustaining employment and economic growth.
- ISBs will need to be adequately funded and resourced to ensure moderation and standard setting is consistently applied across the country.

General comments

Our sector covers mining, quarrying and tunnelling and with over 1,000 active work sites, we cover the length and breadth of New Zealand.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is highly valued by employers in our sector as it develops the skills necessary for employment, such as working as part of a team, reliability, as well as technical skills.

The proposed move to stronger industry and employer input via new Industry Skills Boards (ISBs) increases the opportunity for our sector to directly influence the design of qualifications, programmes, and skills standards most relevant to the extractive industries. ISBs are the appropriate bodies to shape VET subjects that are connected to real post-school opportunities. They should have the flexibility to draw on existing content and standards or develop entirely new content for VET subjects, based on industry needs.

Priority 1: Achievement

We support changes to vocational education and training that will enable more providers to move into work-based learning and develop new apprenticeship and traineeship programmes. This will enable learners to move more seamlessly between provider-based and work-based learning.

Priority 2: Economic Impact and Innovation

Flexibility in provider choice and the potential for more providers to offer work-based and

apprenticeship training should give industry the opportunity to shape or even directly deliver vocational education. The apprenticeships and traineeships developed should not only ensure workers

develop the capabilities businesses need today, but that they are prepared for changing industry environments.

Priority 3: Access and Participation

Due to the geographical spread, and variable sizes of our businesses, we support more agile and responsive delivery models to support upskilling and retraining, which are critical for sustaining employment and economic growth. This needs to include more accessible work-based learning and quality online provision giving learners more options for accessing tertiary education.

Pathways into tertiary education need to be clearer, particularly for vocational education options. It needs to be clear to students leaving secondary school how they take the next step to progress their goals and ambitions, and where to go for help. High-quality information needs to be available to them on career pathways and employment outcomes to support their decisions.

Priority 4: Integration and Collaboration

We support the TES placing emphasis on regional responsiveness, and the support of training tailored to local industry conditions and better engaging with Māori and rural learners, as these groups are highly represented in the extractives sector.

Delivering the Strategy

The shift to regional or industry-led delivery has the potential to increase the risk of variable quality, moderation, and consistency, particularly if implementation is poorly managed. ISBs will need to be adequately funded and resourced to ensure moderation and standard setting is consistently applied across the country.

The TES does not discuss funding rates, eligibility for public courses, and support for employer-led or industry-led training, especially for small operators. Clarity is needed so there is no impediment to sector access and engagement.

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