

Department of State Growth

SKILLS TASMANIA

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Literacy Advisory Panel
Department of Premier and Cabinet

Dear Panel

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Final Consultation Report for the Development of Tasmania's Community-wide Framework.

Skills Tasmania has reviewed the paper and offers the following comments.

The school years

This section of the paper focuses on young people who are engaged in the formal schooling system. At the adult learning forum hosted in February 2022 by the then Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth, participants identified a need for additional support and tailoring to learning styles that don't necessarily respond well in a traditional school-based learning environment. For these people, where that support is not available, intensive assistance is often required to support workforce participation as an adult.

Lifelong learning

As observed in the paper, learning begins with parents, families and carers as the first teachers of their children. Adults come to learning from different places, backgrounds, social and family circumstances, so there needs to be a whole suite of different services to support their journey, including through industry/work, community and education.

Some forum participants suggested that a lack of 'family literacy' can impact on literacy levels. They suggested that while there are institutions that focus on children or adults as separate groups this results in a siloed approach to learning and literacy. Whole of government and community approaches to literacy and learning is an issue the framework might explore further.

Specific support for learners through Department of State Growth

Skills Tasmania's Training and Work Pathways Program provides grants to eligible individuals or organisations to undertake targeted activities that address specific disadvantage impacting on people accessing and participating in training and employment. This may include addressing literacy, numeracy or other foundation skills needs. Training provided in this program can be nationally recognised training, but this is not a requirement, and projects may target participants who aren't ready to enrol in a formal training program, including people who need targeted literacy support.

Jobs Tasmania offers a range of programs that directly support people facing barriers to engaging in employment, education or training, including people with foundation skills/LLN needs. This may include referral to training providers.

Since 2019 the Digital Ready for Daily Life program has provided targeted small group training sessions and workshops around the state to build the confidence and digital capability of vulnerable Tasmanians. The program has partnered with community organisations to deliver assistance sessions that address the needs of specific community groups around Tasmania

National Skills Reforms

Australian Government and State and Territory Skills Ministers and officials are working on a new National Skills Agreement that will guide longer term reform in the vocational education and training (VET) sector. This will include measures to ensure that “no Australians are left behind as the Australian economy transitions and adapts to structural change, including by providing opportunities for life-long learning and foundation skills development”. Part of this work includes developing a national foundation skills strategy that will set out responsibilities of the Australian Government and each state and territory.

As work on the Tasmanian framework progresses, we suggest Skills Tasmania liaise regularly with your team to share progress on the national framework to ensure consistency in commitments and actions (including potentially advocating for a whole of government approach to these challenges at a national level).

Literacy workforce

The adult learning forum also identified a need for a highly trained and professional literacy workforce to complement the voluntary tutor workforce. This might require incentives for people to enter literacy training as a profession. A possible element for the community-wide framework could be support for adult literacy workforce and ongoing professional development in the form of a community of practice in adult learning to form stronger connections and relationships between practitioners and services.

In respect of resources available for adult literacy practitioners, we note that the Tasmanian Council for Adult Literacy (TCAL) has recently released a suite of videos developed in conjunction with Libraries Tasmania, following a workforce development project funded by Skills Tasmania.

In respect of teachers being skilled to teach literacy, VET teacher qualifications are developed nationally. The Training and Education Training Package (TAE) has recently been updated but there is no requirement for a person undertaking a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (the minimum qualification needed to teach VET) to study units relating to foundational skills in their course. However, in order to undertake training and assessment within an RTO, a person with a Certificate IV must also have a credential pertaining to addressing adult language, literacy and numeracy skills.

Support for learners in the VET system

In Tasmania, nationally recognised foundation skills qualifications are mostly provided by TasTAFE. While TasTAFE delivers specific courses, a lot of foundation skills support/training in the VET sector is delivered as wraparound support, which is more difficult to quantify or identify.

Under the current Standards for Registered Training Organisations¹ (RTOs) (which a provider must comply with to maintain its registration with the Australian Skills Quality Authority) an RTO must determine the support needs of individual learners and provide access to the educational and

support services necessary for the individual learner to meet the requirements of the training product.

Under draft new Standardsⁱⁱ, an RTO would be required to specifically review the existing skills and competencies of the learner, including their language, literacy, numeracy, and digital proficiency, and provide advice about the appropriateness of the training product to meet their needs. This is intended to make sure a learner has the capacity to undertake the training before they enrol.

Data

The primary source of data for the VET sector is the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). This may be of use in exploring literacy and numeracy issues and may be able to be used to develop useful indicators, but this would require further work and analysis as there is no direct measures of literacy and numeracy.

Skills Tasmania would be happy to explore this further with you if this would be useful.

Overall

In respect of adult literacy and numeracy, we believe there is a need for continued support for and investment in initiatives that are already proven successful, such as 26TEN and Libraries Tasmania's tutoring service. There is a significant risk of diluting the overall benefit if our investment is spread too thinly, and it may take considerable time for new initiatives to become accepted and recognised by the people who might access them.

Skills Tasmania is regularly hearing from industry peaks and employers that low levels of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy are a major barrier to workforce participation and upskilling in Tasmania.

Skills Tasmania is keen to work closely with the panel in relation to the areas of the framework that are relevant to our work, as well as to ensure that the Tasmanian literacy framework leverages outcomes for Tasmania through the national foundation skills work current occurring through the national skills portfolio. We are also guided by the recently- released Ministerial Priorities for the Training and Workforce Development Systemⁱⁱⁱ, which include promoting lifelong learning and improving the accessibility of the VET system for adult learners.

Please contact Barb Dunford at barb.dunford@skills.tas.gov.au for more information.

Yours sincerely



Alexandra Paterson

A/ General Manager, Skills and Workforce

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ⁱ <https://www.asqa.gov.au/about/asqa-overview/key-legislation/standards-rtos-2015>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-reform/skills-reform-overview/quality-reforms#toc-revising-the-standards-for-rtos>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://www.skills.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/410564/Ministerial_Priorities_Training_and_Workforce_Development_System.pdf