

Media release

Future minerals workforce needs flexible education system

Statement from Tania Constable, Chief Executive Officer

The recommendations in the review of the Australian Qualifications Framework conducted by Professor Peter Noonan would be a major step forward in the delivery of job-ready graduates from both Vocational Education and Training (VET) and higher education providers if accepted by the Federal Government.

With demand for skilled workers growing across Australia as the mining production boom continues, the MCA has long advocated for more flexible, higher quality and responsive training and workforce development to build the minerals workforce of the future.

A large proportion of the minerals workforce is highly skilled: 67 per cent hold a Certificate III level qualification or higher, above the national average; more than four per cent of the workforce is currently apprentices and trainees, and one in five workers also hold a bachelor degree or higher.

Delivering a flexible, functional and fluid tertiary education system at the post-secondary VET and higher education level is critical to meeting the skills needs of the sector, especially as specialist skills associated with innovation and technology adoption increase.

In particular, Professor Noonan's recommendation that 'microcredentials' would be recognised to allow providers to offer short, highly-targeted courses to students and employers looking to fill a skills gap without getting bogged down in red tape would be an important part of a renewed and reinvigorated education system.

The future minerals workforce will be more diverse, geographically distributed and digitally connected. As the nature of work changes and evolves, workers will need skills and capabilities that are adaptable, transferable and relevant to the needs of the future economy.

In this context, the review's recommendation that the diversity of post-secondary education be recognised and reworked and to offer clear and flexible entry and exit points, as well as pathways within and between VET and higher education, is very positive.

The MCA commends Minister for Education Dan Tehan and Minister for Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business Senator Michaelia Cash for initiating the review and urges Federal Cabinet to back these recommendations to help support more jobs in Australia's world-leading minerals sector, especially in regional communities.

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