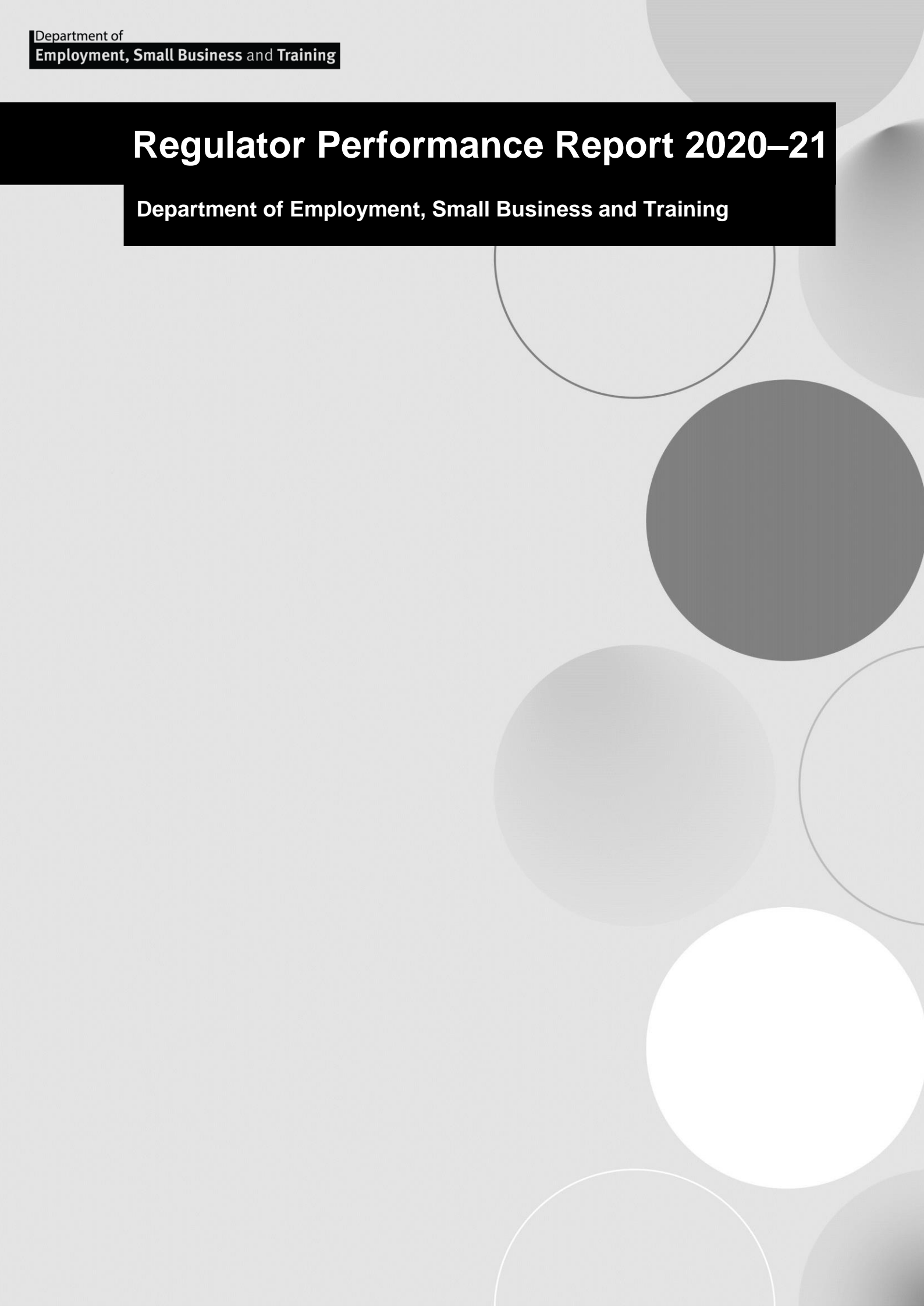


Regulator Performance Report 2020–21

Department of Employment, Small Business and Training



Regulator Performance Framework: DESBT annual performance report 2020–21

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An electronic version of this document is available at desbt.qld.gov.au.

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Introduction

The Queensland Government's Regulator Performance Framework (the Framework) is a key element of the Better Regulation Strategy.

The Framework consists of five model practices with each accompanied by three supporting principles that are intended to minimise the burden on regulated businesses, particularly small businesses, and individuals. These practices are consistent with similar principles adopted in other jurisdictions nationally and internationally.

The Office of Productivity and Red Tape Reduction within Queensland Treasury since June 2021 (the former Queensland Productivity Commission), through the Office of Best Practice Regulation delivers the regulatory review function across government. This includes maintaining a **central repository** of all reports and being the central point of contact for inquiries relating to the Framework.

Purpose and scope

This is the 2020–21 annual performance report for the Department of Employment, Small Business and Training (DESBT) demonstrating implementation of the Framework. The scope of this report relates to regulating and administering apprenticeships and traineeships in Queensland under the ***Further Education and Training Act 2014*** (FET Act). However, the apprenticeship and traineeship system is also supported by many non-legislative components, which are recognised in this report.

Apprenticeships and traineeships are important to Queensland's current and future economic prosperity that depends on the availability of a skilled workforce. Apprenticeship and traineeships are entered into voluntarily by employers and apprentices/trainees with the intention of the apprentice/trainee gaining skills and abilities necessary to achieve a completion certificate issued under the FET Act.

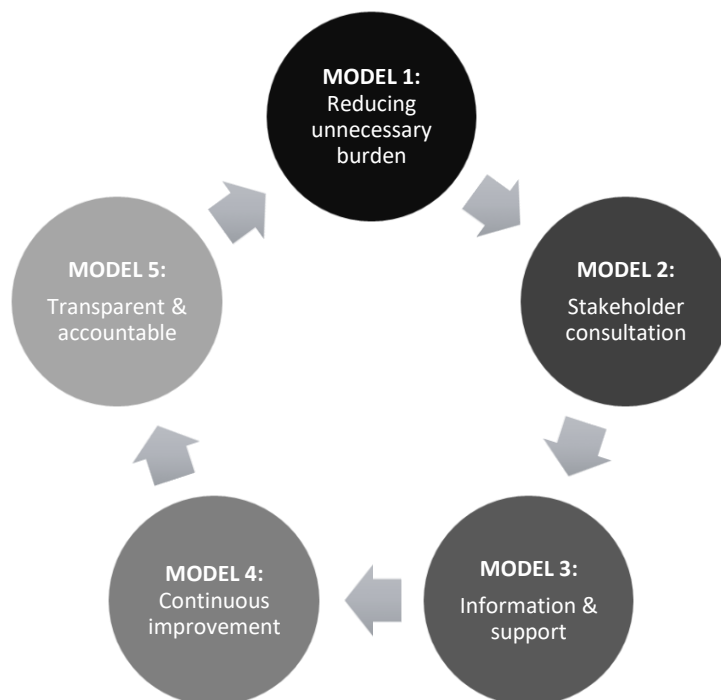
Whilst there are provisions in the FET Act that provide a supportive framework, the legislation provisions act in concert with non-legislation based administrative activities, funding arrangements managed by both the Australian and state governments, and the compliance activities of regulators such as the Australian Skills Quality Authority (Australian Government). Additionally, employment related matters are addressed outside the apprenticeship and traineeship system through either Fair Work Australia or the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

Report

This report is structured around the Framework's reporting requirements and each of the five model practices (see **Figure 1**). This report demonstrates how the department, through the Queensland Apprenticeship and Traineeship Office (QATO), is translating the model practices of **regulating Queensland apprenticeships and traineeships** through business practices and plans for future improvements.

Further information about the Framework and the practices are available on the website at qpc.qld.gov.au.

Figure 1: Five model practices



Overview of the department

The department's legislative framework

The department is responsible for supporting the Minister for Employment and Small Business and Minister for Training and Skills Development. The department recognises the important relationship between employment outcomes, strong small businesses and a skilled workforce for the wellbeing of Queenslanders and their communities.

The department delivers a broad range of services, with a particular focus on supporting businesses, providing individuals with training and influencing more economic participation opportunities aligned with Queensland's employment, skilling and economic recovery priorities. For further information about DESBT's range of programs and services, visit the website at desbt.qld.gov.au.

The responsibilities of ministers and their portfolios are set out in Administrative Arrangements Orders as published in the Queensland Government Gazette and [online](#). DESBT's ministerial responsibilities are:

- Employment policies and programs
- International vocational education and training
- Lead development of small business policy and strategy across government
- Skills and workforce development
- Small business advocacy
- Small business capability and resilience
- Small business regulatory reform
- Vocational education and training including technical and further education.

Queensland apprenticeships and traineeships fall under the ministerial responsibility for vocational education and training including technical and further education.

The legislation administered by the department is as follows:

- ***Further Education and Training Act 2014 (FET Act)***
- ***Jobs Queensland Act 2015***
- ***TAFE Queensland Act 2013***
- ***Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Act 2012.***

During 2020–21, machinery of government changes occurred as detailed in the Administrative Arrangements Order (No.1) 2021 published 29 June 2021 on the webpage at qld.gov.au/about/how-government-works/government-responsibilities.

For the department, the Acts previously administered jointly with other Agencies to the extent they were relevant to the Quandamooka Aboriginal People, were removed when the ministerial responsibilities changed through the Administrative Arrangements Order.

The department's context

The Queensland apprenticeship and traineeship system is co-ordinated by QATO, located within the department. The department has officers located in seven regions throughout Queensland to provide information and assistance on all aspects of vocational education and training (VET).

The department assists all parties to meet their obligations during an apprenticeship or traineeship and issues a certificate to verify its completion.

The FET Act has a number of provisions that can broadly be captured under the following two types of events:

<p>Training contract lifecycle events</p>	<p>The employer and apprentice/trainee voluntarily enter into a training contract and the role of DESBT is to consider whether the training contract meets the requirements of the FET Act. Throughout the training contract period a number of activities may occur such as transfers, cancellations, suspensions, stand-downs or completions.</p> <p>DESBT may either be required to concur with the parties or mediate between the parties to decide an outcome. These lifecycle events provide an opportunity to support the apprentice/trainee to achieve successful apprenticeship/traineeship outcomes.</p>
<p>Compliance events</p>	<p>It is important to note that when completing an apprenticeship/traineeship, a person is expected to be able to operate at a level required by industry of a qualified person i.e. industry proficiency. A quality outcome in this regard encourages employers to retain completed apprentices/trainees and continuity of employment once qualified. In addition, it provides benefits to Queensland's economy through enhancing the skilled workforce broadly and having a skilled Queensland workforce is beneficial to the State's economy and prosperity. There are some provisions in the FET Act that assist DESBT in addressing quality/compliance issues.</p> <p>Due to the influence of external legislation and funding agreement compliance, in most cases issues under the FET Act are able to be resolved administratively, through education and mediation by DESBT field officers or through the involvement of the Queensland Training Ombudsman.</p>

During an apprenticeship or traineeship, the department's main activities include:

- working cooperatively with key stakeholders to achieve the outcomes that stakeholders are seeking from the apprenticeship or traineeship
- educating parties about their obligations under the training contract
- facilitating the resolution of training related issues between the parties, and with the supervising registered training organisation (SRTO) as required
- administering requested changes to training contracts
- processing travel and accommodation subsidies for apprentices and trainees
- providing funding assistance for cancelled apprentices and trainees
- supporting apprentices and trainees with a disability.

Apprenticeship and traineeship system

The apprenticeship and traineeship system is a complex multi-organisational system spanning two levels of government, with the apprentice or trainee, and the employer at the centre, managing the training contract between them. The system interacts between a variety of state and federal legislation, and administrative and funding arrangements.

Apprenticeships and traineeships combine paid employment-based experience with training and have a long tradition and history in Australia. Apprentices and trainees work towards the completion of a nationally recognised qualification while learning valuable skills on-the-job at a workplace and under the guidance of a SRTO.

Apprentices are trained in a skilled trade, (e.g. electrical, plumbing, cabinet-making, automotive) and, upon successful completion, become a qualified tradesperson. Apprenticeships generally take three to four years to complete.

Trainees are trained in vocational areas (e.g. business administration, information technology, tourism) and, upon successful completion, receive a qualification in their chosen vocational area. Traineeships generally take between twelve months and three years to complete.

For both apprenticeships and traineeships, they:

- can be full-time, part-time, or school-based, where some training is undertaken while the apprentice or trainee is in high school, however cannot be completed on a casual basis
- can be accessed by existing employees
- require an employer to enter into a **training contract** with the apprentice or trainee, which is a legally binding agreement to work and train together for a length of time
- require an employer to work with a SRTO and the apprentice or trainee to negotiate a **training plan**.

Supervising Registered Training Organisation

A SRTO delivers the training component of an apprenticeship or traineeship and is responsible for assessing the skills and competence of the apprentice or trainee as they progress. The SRTO is a registered training organisation (RTO) with the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), which has accepted the role of SRTO for an apprentice or trainee. The employer and apprentice or trainee must both support the nomination of the SRTO.

SRTOs have specific responsibilities under the FET Act, which include:

- assessing the employer's capacity to supervise and train the apprentice or trainee
- negotiating and developing the training plan with the employer and apprentice or trainee within the first three months of the training contract, or as required
- delivering training required under the training plan, either in the workplace or at the training organisation
- providing the apprentice or trainee with a training record for the apprenticeship or traineeship
- verifying on-the-job training delivered by the employer
- signing a completion agreement together with the employer or trainee, when the apprentice or trainee has completed all training and assessment required.

Some SRTOs are funded by DESBT under a contractual arrangement to provide training for most apprenticeships and some traineeships, with the remainder being unfunded. The Queensland Government invests in training based on industry advice to provide Queenslanders with the skills they need to gain meaningful and sustainable employment. Apprenticeships and traineeships in Queensland are publicly funded under a variety of programs with RTOs entering into a Skills Assure Supplier Agreement with DESBT to provide accredited training.

Accordingly, SRTOs have obligations in relation to the apprenticeship and traineeship system through the Skills Assure Supplier Agreement, the FET Act and are required to meet the requirements of ASQA to be registered to deliver a qualification.

SRTO services include:

- providing the apprentice or trainee with training materials
- providing the apprentice or trainee with an appropriate quantity and quality of training, and assessing the apprentice or trainee as competent or otherwise
- ensuring the parties are aware of any costs associated with the training and the implications of government funding (e.g. User Choice program)
- arranging additional learning support if needed (e.g. numeracy and literacy)
- issuing the qualification stated in the training plan upon successful completion.

Context of the legislation

Apprenticeships and traineeships combine paid employment-based experience with training delivery. The employment contract and training delivery matters are predominantly covered by the following national legislation:

- the *Fair Work (Commonwealth Powers) and Other Provisions Act 2009* refers the majority of Queensland's Industrial Relations powers to the Australian Government, except for Queensland public sector and local government, which are regulated principally under the *Queensland Industrial Relations Act 2016*. This means that the majority of apprentices and trainees who are employed in the private sector, are subject to the Fair Work Commission, and not the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.
- the *Vocational Education and Training (Commonwealth Powers) Act 2012* refers powers to regulate VET to the Australian Government, while retaining some powers for apprenticeship and traineeship administration. Accordingly, RTOs who deliver and oversight the formal training, are regulated by ASQA. RTOs have specific apprenticeship/traineeship responsibilities identified in the FET Act when they are performing the role of SRTO.

DESBT remains a significant funder of training delivery and has entered into funding agreements with RTOs and conducts audits of RTO funding agreement outcomes. While these activities are outside the framework provided by the FET Act, they contribute to the broader role of the department.

Queensland Training Ombudsman

In recognition that VET is a complex system involving the Australian and Queensland Governments and many stakeholders, the Queensland Government established the Queensland Training Ombudsman through provisions in the FET Act to assist Queenslanders navigate the system and to resolve issues and concerns.

Summary of the legislation

The Chief Executive of DESBT is responsible for managing the apprenticeship and traineeship system in Queensland under the FET Act.

The FET Act streamlines the regulation of apprenticeships and traineeships and establishes a robust and modern legislative framework for training.

It is focused on reducing red tape, removing unnecessary regulation and supporting consumers of VET services.

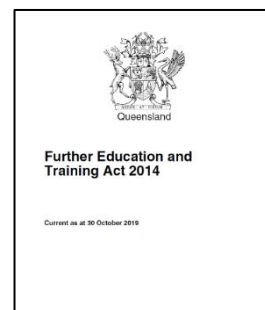
During 2020–21, there were no legislative changes to the FET Act.

There are six key objectives of the FET Act, which are to:

1. strengthen Queensland's economic base by providing a skilled workforce that meets the current and future needs of industry, government and the community
2. facilitate the provision of VET that is linked to employment and is responsive to the future workforce development and skills requirements of industry
3. support the continued development of high-quality training by and within industry
4. support Queenslanders to access and complete the skills training they need to get a job and contribute to the State's economy and their own prosperity
5. establish a simple, streamlined apprenticeship and traineeship system featuring flexible, industry-endorsed approaches to trade training
6. support industry and employers to take on, train and retain apprentices and trainees.

The key elements of apprenticeships and traineeships provided for in the FET Act, include:


- extension of the probationary period of a training contract if the parties to the contract agree, up to a maximum of six months from the commencement date of the contract
- amendment to a training contract with or without an application by the parties to the contract
- transfer of a training contract from one employer to another either permanently or temporarily
- suspension of the parties' responsibilities associated with a training contract for a period of up to one year
- temporary suspension of a training contract for up to 30 days if the employer temporarily cannot provide the training, stated in the training plan for the apprentice or trainee
- change the mode of delivery of a training plan for an apprentice or trainee with or without an application, if the change is necessary to assist the apprentice or



trainee make the required progress to achieve the qualification or statement of attainment under the training plan

- cancellation of a training contract when the parties to the contract agree; or upon application by one of the parties to the contract; or when specific grounds exist
- extension of the nominal term of a training contract if the apprentice or trainee is unable to complete the requirements of the training plan before the nominal term ends and parties to the contract agree
- completion of a training contract upon application by the parties to the contract and the SRTO; and in circumstances where the SRTO has stopped operating as an RTO before a completion agreement is signed by the parties and the SRTO.

Model practice 1: Ensure regulatory activity is proportionate to risk and minimises unnecessary burden



MODEL 1:
Reducing
unnecessary
burden

Supporting principles

- A proportionate approach is applied to compliance activities, engagement, and regulatory enforcement actions.
- Regulators do not unnecessarily impose on regulated entities.
- Regulatory approaches are updated and informed by intelligence gathering so that effort is focussed towards risk.

Stakeholders under the FET Act

The FET Act provides a regulatory framework for employers and apprentices/trainees who voluntarily enter an apprenticeship/traineeship arrangement as parties to a training contract, with the intention of developing the skills and abilities of an apprentice or trainee necessary to achieve a completion certificate issued under the FET Act.

Accordingly, the stakeholders who fall under the requirements of FET Act are:

- employers of apprentices and trainees
- apprentices and trainees.

Importantly, the department does not directly regulate employers, RTOs or other skills sector stakeholders, rather the department's focus is on the training contract by managing registrations, transfers and sustaining the contract, which is separate to the employment contract between the employer and their apprentice/trainee.

Information on the size of the apprenticeship and traineeship system is provided on the DESBT [apprentice and trainee participation activity data and statistics](#) website.

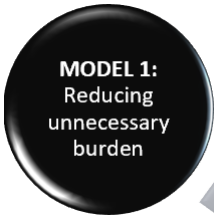
Group Training Organisations (GTOs) and Principal Employer Organisations (PEOs) are categories of employer that employ apprentices and/or trainees and places them in hosting arrangements with one or more suitable 'host' employers throughout the apprenticeship/traineeship to provide a well-rounded training experience.

Due to the focus being on providing an employment-based pathway for skilled workers, unions and employer/industry organisations have an active interest in apprenticeship and traineeship outcomes. Accordingly, these organisations are actively involved in providing direct advice to DESBT or strategic advice through Jobs Queensland.

Context: Compliance activities

The regulatory framework for apprenticeships/traineeships provided by the FET Act can be broadly captured under two types of events:

- training contract lifecycle events
- compliance events.



MODEL 1:
Reducing
unnecessary
burden

These two types of events are explained in this report in more detail under the earlier section called 'The department's context'. Both events can be activities that routinely occur throughout the term of the training contract affecting its status in some way, such as a transfer to a new employer. Also, compliance events are provisions in the Act that assist DESBT in addressing quality or compliance issues.

Training contract lifecycle events

The majority of training contract lifecycle events are initiated by the employer and/or the apprentice/trainee. The role of DESBT in these circumstances is that of a system administrator, mediator and sometimes deciding between the competing positions of the stakeholders. In situations where the facts involve a subjective decision to be made by a delegate of the chief executive officer, there is usually an avenue of appeal provided by the FET Act to either the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission or the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal. There have been no appeals submitted since the commencement of the FET Act.

Compliance events

While FET Act compliance applies to all parties to the training contract, the focus of the apprenticeship and traineeship system is to guide and foster the development of quality training pathways to provide a skilled workforce to support a robust Queensland economy. Accordingly, this requires the active participation of all stakeholders including employers and apprentices and trainees. Therefore, the regulatory powers available for compliance events are considered the last resort as these rarely lead to the active participation of the parties in supporting a quality training outcome. Consequently, education and guidance by DESBT regional field officers, contact centre staff and internet resources are utilised to support the achievement of quality outcomes.

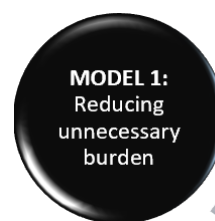
Strategic monitoring and compliance

A non-legislative component that supports and improves the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory framework for apprenticeships/traineeships, and strengthens stakeholder and consumer trust, has been the Queensland Government's introduction of the Skills Assure initiative from 1 July 2020.

Being a Skills Assure supplier is a requirement for all registered training organisations who deliver training and assessment services subsidised by DESBT. Employers and apprentices/trainees are able to easily find Skills Assure Suppliers that have met the rigorous requirements to deliver government subsidised apprenticeship/traineeship training under the User Choice program, through the DESBT **Queensland Training Information Service**. However, it is noted that DESBT does not fund SRTOs for some apprenticeships and traineeships, which is detailed further under the following 'Risk Management Approach' section.

Changes under the Skills Assure initiative included:

- approved suppliers may display the Skills Assure logo on their webpages and marketing materials
- a new agreement for Skills Assure Suppliers with strengthened provisions
- a requirement to submit details on contracted third parties
- system enhancements to improve data validation.



This initiative strengthens and improves the confidence of Queenslanders that government-subsidised training is provided by quality RTOs.

Skills Assure means that RTOs who fail to meet requirements determined by the department will no longer be able to deliver government-subsidised training. A total of 441 Skills Assure Suppliers are contracted to deliver government-funded activity to Queenslanders.

The Skills Assure initiative continues to safeguard the integrity and quality of training in Queensland for students with the following measures in place:

- an independent review undertaken by the Queensland Training Ombudsman with six recommendations to improve compliance including strengthening of Skills Assure Suppliers policies and increasing communication on non-compliances. As published in November 2020, the government accepted these recommendations with implementation commenced
- the Queensland VET Quality Forum, established in 2020–21, to support quality in VET, with strong collaboration occurring between regulators in this Forum
- the Training Scammer hotline (1800 773 048)
- regular compliance monitoring of Skills Assure Suppliers through reviews of false and misleading advertising; website compliance; monthly data submissions and indicators of risk occurrences
- compliance audits against the requirements of the Skills Assure Suppliers agreement and program policies.

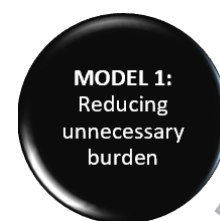
Risk management approach

The department adopts an enterprise-wide risk management approach based on the Australian and New Zealand Standard *ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management – Guidelines*. The department's Risk Management Framework is a comprehensive approach to identifying, assessing and treating risk based on the department's risk appetite within the context of our risk environment and is designed to support the achievement of the department's priorities as presented in the Strategic Plan.

The department through QATO manages the following key risks related to regulating and administering apprenticeships and traineeships in Queensland:

- reputational risk that may impact the department's ability to continue delivering an industry led quality product to apprentices and trainees. This may be due to a range of reasons including a downturn in economic activity impacting employment opportunities for apprentices and trainees.
- risk of fraud or corruption that may impact the department's ability to maintain public (i.e. parents, employers, apprentices/trainees), industry and provider confidence in recognising quality VET pathways, products and services. This may be due to a range of reasons including individual or provider behavior.

The department implements a range of existing controls and tools to effectively mitigate these risks including communication and engagement activities with stakeholders and workforce development reviews undertaken with businesses in regional locations to identify opportunities that can link jobseekers to apprenticeships or traineeships, monitoring completion rates for apprentices and trainees, and implementing the Skills Assure program which provides regular monitoring of data and auditing, and enhancements to data validation.



Departmental resources are used appropriately and proportionately to manage these risks by focusing on a supportive, educative approach with monitoring controls at one end of the continuum, rather than only relying on enforcement at the other end of the continuum. This reduces any unnecessary burden on employers and apprentices/trainees by tailoring engagement activities and information resources to keep stakeholders informed. This design principle results in greater positive outcomes and incremental improvements by encouraging desired behavior, however, penalties could still be used if deemed necessary.

For example, the department continues to keep stakeholders informed of developments and requirements through a supportive process of regular visits by regional officers with employers and apprentice/trainees in the workplace, and with apprentices/trainees when attending training with the SRTTO, rather than attempting to address broad-brush industry level operations.

The focus for the department remains on the training contract by managing registrations, transfers and sustaining the contract throughout the apprenticeship or traineeship.

Other types of risks in the VET training system QATO manages and responds to are identified below.

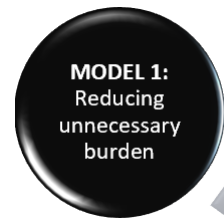
Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) Providers

AASN Providers are contracted by the Australian Government to provide targeted services which deliver tailored advice and support to employers, apprentices and trainees. AASN Providers are also funded under a Services Agreement with DESBT to provide training contract related services, and to be the first point of contact for the administration of all training contracts. The department has delegated certain powers and functions for uncontested or agreed matters under the FET Act to AASN Providers.

As part of the supportive, educative approach in managing risk, the department provides training and support to AASN Provider staff, which includes internet resources, a dedicated QATO email inbox, and assistance from DESBT regional officers to AASN Provider field officers. QATO also conducts twice yearly structured reviews of the AASN Provider's compliance with the requirements of the Services Agreement. Feedback on identified issues is provided at the time of exiting each review, followed by a review report provided within one month of the review being conducted. However, if an AASN Provider receives an adverse review, the department will invite a response in writing from the AASN Provider of the reason why the department should not impose sanctions such as reducing the AASN Provider's DESBT funding entitlement and/or restricting/removing the AASN Provider's facility to directly register training contracts in the department's system.

Supervising Registered Training Organisations (SRTOs)

The specific responsibilities of the SRTO under the FET Act are explained in this report in more detail under the earlier section called 'Apprenticeship and traineeship system—Supervising Registered Training Organisation'. As part of the supportive, educative approach in managing risk, the department provides training and support to SRTO staff, which includes internet resources, and encouragement and assistance from DESBT regional officers and call centre staff. The SRTO's responsibilities under the FET Act are significant to the department's ability to continue delivering an industry led quality product to apprentices and trainees. However, failure of the SRTO to deliver quality training to the apprentice/trainee, or notify the department of any issues with regards to an employer's capacity to provide supervision, facilities and training required for an apprentice/trainee may lead to a decrease in industry and stakeholder confidence in the apprenticeship and traineeship system.



As the department does not directly regulate RTOs, the department may undertake a monitoring approach towards the training being provided to any apprentices/trainees for which the RTO agrees to become the SRTO. However, if the RTO holds a Skills Assure Supplier Agreement with the department for the User Choice program, the department may impose sanctions against the Supplier's Agreement following further review and auditing processes.

Group Training Organisations and Principal Employer Organisations

Group Training Organisations (GTOs) and PEOs are required to be recognised as either a GTO or PEO under the FET Act if they are employing more than 24 apprentices/trainees under a hosting arrangement with other employers. GTOs receive funding and are therefore subject to more requirements than PEOs. This arrangement provides some flexibility to manage the risk that a large number of apprentices/trainees are employed by a GTO or PEO who do not have their own facilities and rely on host employers. The locality type risks in this area are further managed through agreements and auditing arrangements with both GTOs and PEOs. It should also be noted that GTOs and PEOs are regulated by Labour Hire Licensing Queensland (LHLQ) as the regulator of the *Labour Hire Licensing Act 2017*. DESBT maintains regular contact with LHLQ to discuss any inconsistencies identified as the need arises.

Tailored compliance activities and addressing feedback

In addition to receiving feedback directly from employers and apprentices/trainees through the department's call centre on areas requiring further compliance action, the department receives intelligence on issues from regional field officers, SRTOs, unions, employer organisations, and industry bodies. In many cases, the issues are resolved without resorting to the compliance provisions of the FET Act. This is due to the department adopting a problem solving and educative approach initially, in order to strengthen trust and encourage positive behaviours, rather than engage immediately in adversarial and penalty type actions. This approach has proven to gain more informed and longer-term positive behaviours and outcomes. However, it is noted that whilst compliance action is a rarity, there are currently two employers that have been declared as prohibited employers under section 61 of the FET Act.

In practice, any compliance related activity is co-ordinated through QATO, to assist in providing consistency and equity in applying compliance provisions and sanctions. This approach also reduces any conflicts of interest and facilitates separation between the investigator and decision-maker.



This tailored and coordinated approach using more educative and engagement tools offers flexibility in meeting different needs balanced with consistent compliance decision-making. For example, in the electrical industry new employer resource assessments (ERAs) were introduced a number of years ago due to a review of training in the electrical conducted by the Queensland Training Ombudsman. This review was prompted by a Corner's enquiry into the death of a labourer.

Regional DESBT officers conduct regular reviews of the ERAs ensuring training providers are regularly reviewing the ERAs in accordance with department requirements. These ERAs are also reviewed as part of the process when extension requests for electrical apprenticeships are received as part of the continued monitoring of training providers delivering training to apprentices in the electrical industry.

DESBT regional officers continue to monitor their cohort of apprentices and trainees across the different industries located in the respective regions and where they identify similar issues or trends, they collaborate with each other to determine a consistent approach for their monitoring program.

Supporting outcomes by monitoring pathways with supports

DESBT regional offices maintain proactive contact with employers, including new VET system employers, with an active apprentice or trainee to ensure awareness of DESBT support and assistance that is available. For example, regional offices provide support for employers and suspended trainees and apprentices and monitoring of training contracts to increase the rate of completions.

Compliance sanctions

As an example of compliance related activity co-ordinated through QATO, section 42 of the FET Act includes discipline provisions that allow a reprimand or a fine. On occasions, some DESBT regional officers are able to issue a reprimand whilst a fine can only be considered by a QATO Manager or the QATO Director. The provision of issuing a reprimand or a fine has been rarely used as a more mediated and supportive approach is preferred in the first instance to keep stakeholders engaged and willing to participate in the system on an ongoing basis. This results in a sanctions approach only being considered as a means of last resort.

These provisions of the FET Act also provide for QTO, as an independent officer, to separately investigate issues and to provide advice and recommendations to DESBT on specific cases or system improvements.

Accordingly, the administration of the apprenticeship and traineeship system is managed to minimise the regulatory burden and has a proportionate regulatory response in the rare cases where regulatory sanctions are warranted. During 2020–21, there were nil sanctions issued.

Model practice 2: Consult and engage meaningfully with stakeholders



Supporting principles

- Formal and informal consultation and engagement mechanisms are in place to allow for the full range of stakeholder input and government decision making circumstances.
- Engagement is undertaken in ways that help regulators develop a genuine understanding of the operating environment of regulated entities.
- Cooperative and collaborative relationships are established with stakeholders, including other regulators, to promote trust and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the regulatory framework.

Context: Key stakeholders

The qualifications that underpin apprenticeships and traineeships are developed through an industry driven process, established by the Australian Government with the support of state/territory governments, including the Queensland government. The Australian Government has established and funded the various Industry Reference Committees and Skill Service Organisations to support the development process. DESBT supports this process through encouraging Queensland industry stakeholders to participate in this process and identifies any issues likely to impact on Queensland industry stakeholders.

Once a training package has been endorsed and a qualification is available, an industry proponent requests the declaration of an apprenticeship or traineeship and identifies if there are any specific industry issues that need to be considered in the declaration process. Where any issues are identified, further consultation occurs with stakeholders before a qualification is declared as an apprenticeship or traineeship. In the majority of cases a qualification will be a replacement for an existing qualification and a modified process will be used as the majority of issues are typically considered in the original declaration process.

Throughout the apprenticeship and traineeship, any matters impacting on an apprentice/trainee and their employer will involve both parties, prior to DESBT making a decision. In a number of cases, DESBT will assist in achieving an agreed outcome by the parties or the parties will already have reached agreement.

Strengthening partnerships



The Queensland Skills Strategy—*Skills for Queensland – Great training for quality jobs* targets critical skills needs, new skills needed for existing jobs, emerging opportunities brought about by technology advances, and regional and state-wide priorities.

In implementing the strategy, the department has developed strong partnerships between government, industry and other skills sector stakeholders engaged in creating an enduring skilling and learning culture that will support individuals throughout their working lives and lead to improved job outcomes.

In 2020–21, Skilling Queensland's youth was a departmental priority with funding for free apprenticeships, Free TAFE for under 25s and the Gateway to Industry Schools Program to help students lay pathways to employment and future careers.

During 2020–21, the impacts of COVID-19 continued and the demand for skills changed across Queensland industries, with reduced opportunities in some sectors, while demand for other skills have increased. The department continued to focus on skills and provide opportunities for Queenslanders to participate in education and training that helped keep many Queenslanders, particularly our youth and other disadvantaged Queenslanders, engaged and connected to the labour market during COVID-19.

Reference Groups

DESBT regional offices conduct quarterly Reference Groups (RGs) with relevant stakeholders to provide informed information and seek feedback on issues for improvement and/or clarification.

Regional Jobs Committees

In 2020–21, DESBT supported the six Regional Jobs Committees comprising a broad membership of skills sector stakeholders to ensure government hears industry input to skills investment priorities first-hand.

The Regional Jobs Committees are part of our plan to directly engage with all stakeholders to create more jobs, improve training pathways and drive economic activity across the state. The committees form one of the key actions of the *Skills for Queensland – Great training for quality jobs* strategy and the *Big Plans for Small Business* strategy.

These committees provide an opportunity for local stakeholders to work together to align regional skills and workforce development with local industry and employer needs. The committees bring together local business, government, community leaders, training providers, industry representatives, high schools and unions to ensure training and employment solutions are more accurately aligned with local skills needs and economic activity to support regional jobs growth.



Group Training Organisations

GTOs represent the largest collective employer of apprentices and trainees in Queensland. There were 26 GTOs funded in 2020–21 receiving approximately \$3 million. The three largest were East Coast Apprenticeships, OSMAC Group Training Pty Ltd and MRAEL Ltd.



Informal feedback

DESBT aims to deliver quality services that respond to the needs of Queenslanders and to help achieve this, feedback is encouraged and promoted.

For matters regarding apprenticeships and traineeships, the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network provider is the preferred first point of contact.

Some of the other informal engagement mechanisms include:

- phoning 13QGOV, our Customer Centre or QATO
- in person enquiries at one of our DESBT Regional Offices
- email
- mail
- social media: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Instagram.

Complaints management

The department's customer complaint management system implements section 219A of the *Public Service Act 2008* and complies with Australian and New Zealand Standard *AS/NZS 10002:2014-Guidelines for complaint management organisations*. The department is committed to ensuring customer complaints are managed effectively and provides consistent processes for:

- receiving, recording, responding to and reporting on complaints about the services, products or actions of the department or its staff when providing those services
- analysing and identifying opportunities to improve service delivery
- promoting public confidence in the department's actions and decision by being open and transparent in the management of complaints.

The department's Customer Complaints Management Framework is principles-based on responsiveness, objectivity and fairness, equity, privacy and disclosure, communication, accountability and continuous improvement, as well as the following principles in enabling complaints:

- 'people focussed' meaning everyone has a right to complain and be treated with respect, and should be actively involved in the complaints process as far as practicable and appropriate
- 'ensuring no detriment to the complainant' meaning complainants are not adversely affected because of a complaint made by them or on their behalf
- 'visibility and transparency' meaning Information about how and where a complaint may be made is well publicised on the department's website and made available in writing and verbally at frontline service locations
- 'no charges' meaning a complainant will not be charged a fee to complain

- ‘accessibility’ meaning the department will provide all reasonable and practical help and support to make it easy for all complainants to make a complaint by recognising the particular needs of people, including people with a disability, children, young people, people living in regional and remote areas, the aged and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Also, a complaint may be made to any departmental employee in person, by phone, email letter or using the online form on the website.



During 2020–21, the department received 20 complaints about the subject area categorised as ‘Training and Skills’, of which six required further action, 12 required no further action and two were under review. Some complaints related to activities external to the department and out of scope, whilst a majority of the complaints were not sustained. The main types of corrective actions taken in response to complaints were providing the complainant with further explanation about policies and procedures, providing feedback in response to administrative decisions and improvements to policy and procedures.

The department operates a Customer Centre with most in-coming calls being general enquiries about the department’s services or requests for assistance. During 2020–21, the DESBT Customer Centre received approximately 48,000 calls of enquiry. For enquiries/ requests about apprenticeships and traineeships, these are referred to the relevant regional office for local assistance and/or case management. The nature of the referrals are generally about individual rights and obligations rather than seeking changes to legislation, policy or procedures.

State based regulators

DESBT holds regular consultations with several state-based regulators including the:

- Electrical Safety Office to review practices and requirements across electrical apprenticeships
- Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman
- Jobs Queensland.

Office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman

The QTO strengthens the Queensland’s VET sector by improving consumer protection and providing a clear pathway for complaints.

The QTO offers a free, confidential and independent service to review and resolve enquiries and complaints from anyone in the Queensland VET system including students, RTOs, apprentices, trainees, employers and other stakeholders.

The Office of the QTO:

- helps people to navigate the complex VET sector
- works in partnership with all agencies in the VET sector, including DESBT as the administrator of Queensland apprenticeships and traineeships
- provides free and impartial advice about rights and responsibilities
- reviews issues and provides recommendations

- refers complaints to other relevant agencies if required
- mediates between parties to reach a mutually beneficial solution.



The QTO also plays an advocacy role by reporting on systemic issues in the VET sector and advising the government on ways to improve them. More information about QTO can be found on the website at trainingombudsman.qld.gov.au.

Jobs Queensland

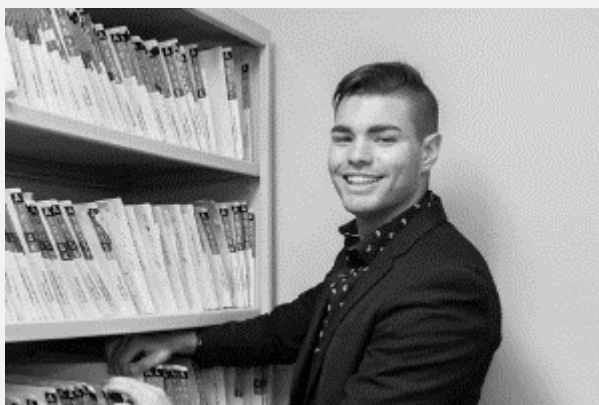
Jobs Queensland is an independent entity established under the **Jobs Queensland Act 2015** that provides strategic advice to government on future skills demand, workforce planning and development, and the traineeship and apprenticeship system. Jobs Queensland operates outside the *FET Act*.

Jobs Queensland brings together industry, employers and employee representatives, regional and community leaders to inform its advice to government. It works proactively across all levels of Government to shape advice and priorities that will facilitate a cohesive and capable workforce for now and the future.

For further information about Jobs Queensland, visit the website at jobsqueensland.qld.gov.au.

Partnerships supporting outcomes

2021 Bob Marshman Trainee of the Year



State winner: Mitchell Pogan

Qualification: Certificate III in Business

Training provider: Sportsready Education

Employer: Western Downs Regional Council

Region: Darling Downs South West

Traineeship gives Mitchell a career close to home

Mitchell Pogan wanted to find a career opportunity that would allow him to remain close to his hometown of Miles, while undertaking work that allowed him to give back to this rural community.

Through his traineeship with Western Downs Regional Council, Mitchell was able to complete a nationally recognised qualification and has now obtained employment with council as a Community Activations Support Officer.

Information sharing with Federal stakeholders



Australian government Department of Education, Skills and Employment

The Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment is responsible for national policies and programs that help Australians find and keep employment and work in safe, fair and productive workplaces.

As the Commonwealth agency responsible for apprenticeship and traineeship matters, QATO engages with the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment through quarterly meetings to promote the building of relationships and sharing of intelligence.

Australian Apprenticeship Support Network

The AASN is a free service and the first point of contact during the life cycle of the apprenticeship or traineeship training contract. The AASN:

- facilitate the signing of the training contract between the employer and apprentice or trainee
- provide an induction and general information about apprenticeships and traineeships
- provide advice on the parties' eligibility to Australian government incentives and help to lodge claims
- make regular contact with the parties to check on the progress of training.

The Australian Government contracts AASN providers to deliver support services nationally through field officers and physical locations (shopfronts). There are currently four Queensland AASN providers, who have been allocated Queensland service areas. These Queensland AASN providers receive some funding from DESBT to:

- make decisions about certain training contract matters as delegated officers under the FET Act
- be the main point of contact for all apprentice and trainee enquiries and refer matters to DESBT when required
- work with DESBT officers to identify and resolve issues related to apprentices and trainees.

The purpose of these arrangements is to minimise the administrative burden for the parties, and to assist in streamlining Australian Government and State requirements through a one-stop shop arrangement. AASN providers only exercise delegations in uncontested or agreed matters, and all contested matters relating to Queensland apprentices or trainees are referred to DESBT for consideration.

AASN providers which are allocated service areas in another state by the Australian Government may operate in Queensland with DESBT's permission as they typically service national employers of apprentices and trainees. However, they are not provided with funding from DESBT.

Model practice 3: Provide appropriate information and support to assist compliance



Supporting principles

- Clear and timely guidance and support is accessible to stakeholders and tailored to meet the needs of the target audience.
- Advice is consistent and, where appropriate, decisions are communicated in a manner that clearly articulate what is required to achieve compliance.
- Where appropriate, regulatory approaches are tailored to ensure compliance activities do not disproportionately burden particular stakeholders (e.g. small business) or require specialist advice.

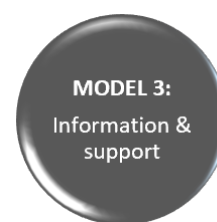
Context: Information and support improving outcomes

Whilst there are enforcement provisions in the FET Act, these provisions are rarely used, and as at November 2021 there have been no penalties obtained in the relevant courts since the introduction of FET Act. This is due to the nature of the first line interventions by the department in providing information on the provisions of the apprenticeship and traineeship system through education and information on the department's website, and guiding support communicated through visits from AASN providers or departmental staff.

QATO conducts regular reviews of the department's web site to ensure it contains up-to-date and accurate information on apprenticeship matters including in operational procedures, policies and guidelines. In addition, QATO provides specialised advice to support departmental regional officers and other decision-making delegates, when making regulatory decisions to ensure consistency and fairness.

For example, in situations when either employers or apprentices/trainees or AASN provider experience issues, the department's website contains conflict resolution tips and consistent processes for resolving issues. The department through a guide recommends following some simple conflict resolution tips first, as outlined in a guide, as well as alternative options for dealing with issues when escalation of a problem is required. The preferred approach is to resolve issues early, reduce disruption and encourage continuation and successful completion of an apprenticeship/traineeship.

The department recognises if problems are not addressed, it can lead to a breakdown between parties and people potentially withdrawing from an apprenticeship/traineeship. The department therefore encourages a problem-solving approach and has consistent processes in place to offer flexibility when required, e.g. making amendments to training contracts, changing training organisation, transferring the contract from one employer to another, and changing a qualification. This way apprentices/trainees and employers are assisted and supported in navigating challenges to keep apprentices/trainees employed and ensuring employers continue to manage training contract obligations.



Support services improving outcomes

A range of support services are also available when apprentices/trainees commence with details encouraged to be included in their training plan. This way, apprentices/trainees feel supported through-out their learning journey, are able to address matters as soon as they arise, and the support services form an essential component enabling successful participation by apprentices/trainees to complete their qualification.

Some of the issues facing employers, apprentices and trainees that the department (or the AASN provider) provide assistance with, are: communication problems; workplace mediation; negotiation and conflict resolution; emotional and mental health issues; personal issues; absenteeism and behavioural issues.

For example:

- disability support is available for all parties: apprentices, trainees, employers and training organisations
- learning support is provided by training organisations as part of their standards to support for participants with language, literacy and numeracy. Schools also provide school-based learning supports for school-based apprentices/trainees
- crisis support is available when more serious concerns arise outside everyday issues as a crisis has the potential to impact apprentices/trainees training contracts. Advocacy services are also available to address any unfair treatment or human rights matters in the workplace which are detailed in an information sheet
- fair treatment workplace support is about apprentices/trainees being treated the same as other employees and all parties knowing expectations about what behaviour is /is not acceptable. Assistance and support are detailed in an information sheet
- incentives, costs and financial support are available to help cover some costs e.g. travel and accommodation subsidy and living away from home allowance.

Supporting career outcomes

2021 Harry Hauenchild Apprentice of the Year



State winner: Lauren Campbell

Qualification: Certificate III in Air-conditioning and Refrigeration

Training provider: Box Hill Institute

Employer: AG Coombs Queensland

Region: Metropolitan

Training pathway to career success – for Lauren

Lauren Campbell has been hooked on the refrigeration trade since she undertook work experience with her employer AG Coombs Queensland while still in Year 12.

Lauren applied for an apprenticeship with them a few months after graduating and hasn't looked back since.

This year, Lauren completed her Certificate III in Air-conditioning and Refrigeration and is delighted to be employed as a fully-qualified tradesperson.

Supporting industry workforce outcomes

2021 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year



State winner: Kasey Hardy

Qualification: Certificate III in Work Health and Safety

Training provider: Harness Energy Services

Employer: Harness Energy Services
Host: Shell QGC

Region: Darling Downs South West

Experiencing success – a life-changing start for Kasey

For Kasey Hardy, a traineeship offered the perfect opportunity to get a taste of the industry, rather than signing up for an apprenticeship before she knew what to expect.

Kasey chose the resources sector to learn more about natural gas extraction, particularly about its impact on the environment. Having now completed her traineeship, she is continuing her workplace health and safety studies through another traineeship.

Model practice 4: Commit to continuous improvement



Supporting principles

- Regular review of the approach to regulatory activities, collaboration with stakeholders and other regulators to ensure it is appropriately risk based, leverages technological innovation and remains the best approach to achieving policy outcomes.
- To the extent possible, reform of regulatory activities is prioritised on the basis of impact on stakeholders and the community.
- Staff have the necessary training and support to effectively, efficiently and consistently perform their duties.

Context: Applying continuous improvement

During 2020–21, the apprenticeship and traineeship system was subject to regular review at both the national and state level, either separately or as part of the vocational education and training system. There were also government reports and policy instruments on different topics that touched and will influence future change in parts of the apprenticeship and traineeship system in Queensland. For example, recent reviews include:

- *Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform*, which was signed by all Australian First Ministers in August 2020. This Agreement sets out reforms to improve the VET system and an approach and priorities for developing a new National Skills Agreement to replace the current National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development. The Agreement includes a commitment to develop a new National Skills Agreement to replace the existing one. Priorities for the new arrangement include a range of measures such as a new funding model, promoting apprenticeships and other employment-based training and reforms to boost geographic mobility and labour supply.
- Productivity Commission *Report on National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development Review*, was released in January 2021, and included recommendations identifying long-term reforms and new funding arrangements.
- Jobs Queensland report: *Strengthening Queensland National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) workforce*, was released in August 2020. Providing quality NDIS services is underpinned by the availability of a suitably skilled and qualified workforce to deliver these services. One of the recommendations included: *That the Queensland Government work with WorkAbility Queensland to establish a new customised traineeship pathway for entry level roles in disability support that prioritise on-the-job learning and support qualification attainment in the industry.*

- Jobs Queensland report: *Lifelong learning: The foundation of future work*, was released in September 2020. Lifelong learning has been identified as a vital workforce response to Queensland's rapidly changing economy.
- Jobs Queensland report: *Future work for small business*, was released in November 2020. Included in the report's research is a summary of different industries and their most common pathways for different professions and workforce.
- QTO report: *Review of Training Delivery linked to Advertising of Vacant Positions in Queensland*, was released in November 2020. The review found the regulators including the Office of Fair Trading and the Office of Industrial Relations, did not identify any breaches of legislation. While the review concluded that major systemic changes were not required, it did recommend more timely and targeted action against poor behaviours by contracted Skills Assure suppliers (SAS) and improved transparency and communication with stakeholders. The report outlined six recommendations in relation to the alleged advertising of jobs that were false or misleading. The Queensland Government accepted five recommendations and accepted in principle one recommendation.



Recommendations driving improvements

In responding to the above listed QTO report that reviewed the advertising of vacant positions and investigated claims of 'bait advertising', the department has been continuing to work with the QTO and other regulators to address the findings of the report. During 2020–21, the department has been implementing a series of new measures recommended by the report.

These include:

- improved communication with apprentices, trainees, students, employers and training providers
- a review of penalties for non-compliance
- improved response times to complaints
- a new Queensland VET Quality Forum consisting of representatives from the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), Office of Fair Trading, Office of Industrial Relations, DESBT and the Queensland Training Ombudsman.

Improvements through regular policy review

The FET Act has been subject to regular review since it was enacted in 2014. The operational policies and procedures that operationalise the legislation are also continually reviewed as a result of any FET Act changes and regular consultation with departmental regional staff, AASN providers, stakeholders, and findings from the QTO. The operational policies and procedures are located on the department's [website](#) and are accessible to stakeholders.

In addition to departmental regional officers, the department maintains a customer centre that regularly provides advice to stakeholders on key system policies and procedures.

Whilst a number of the administrative and funding arrangements affecting the apprenticeship and traineeship system are outside the provisions of the FET Act, QATO regularly consults with relevant organisations to participate in discussions regarding any changes or areas for improvement.

During 2020–21, the department updated the following policies and procedures in relation to apprentices and trainees:

- *Adequate training arrangements procedure*—minor updates to reflect newly declared qualifications
- *Completion of an apprenticeship or traineeship (where the RTO has ceased operating) procedure*—updates to wording of the procedure to better reflect processes undertaken by delegated officers and stakeholders
- *Discipline – fines and reprimand – procedure*—updates to reflect the new format procedures and includes Attachment 1 with extra information to assist delegated officers to make a decision and stakeholders to understand the decision-making process
- *Declaration of apprenticeships and traineeships policy*—minor update to the requirements for a workplace supervisor for an apprentice/trainee.



MODEL 4:
Continuous
improvement

SMS reminder service making things easier

During 2020–21, the department implemented the VET-informed consumer project to make things easier for small businesses when employing apprentices and trainees. This included an automated SMS reminder service for employers, recognising busy employers have a lot to manage. Many employers have told DESBT they do not sit at a computer during office hours and are often out and about managing their business needs.

This new service helps employers remain informed and to keep track of obligations when managing an apprentice or trainee and does not replace existing emails or letters as a form of communicating advice and support. It is a voluntary service where small businesses can stop the SMS reminders at any time.

Reminders are provided at key milestones throughout the apprenticeship or traineeship and as an alert when key documents have been sent e.g. from getting started, to onboarding, delivering, managing and completing. For example, following two months after being registered, an employer may receive the following SMS reminder message:



SMS

A reminder that your training plan must be completed within the first 3 months of all <apprenticeships/traineeships>. The training plan for <apprentice/trainee> (training contract <registration number>) must be completed by <date>. Go to www.business.qld.gov.au/is13 for info on how to do this.

This approach not only serves as a reminder for employers, it also improves compliance by employers in completing the necessary documentation.

Employers of apprentices and trainees from around Queensland provided insights about which communication tools they preferred, and how the department's website content and SMS reminders could provide valuable assistance when managing their apprentices or trainees. Outcomes from the customer research were used in the implementation of the SMS and in building the new website content.

The department is committed to continuously improving policy, processes and service delivery to maintain the best approach in achieving desired outcomes for apprentices, trainees, employers and service providers. This SMS reminder service is an example of collaboration with stakeholders and leveraging available technology to improve service delivery.



Enhancing communication

The department is committed to enhancing communication with government stakeholders, other regulators, apprentices, trainees, providers and employers. Effective communication and timely updates proved critical particularly in 2020–21 responding to COVID-19 and the pace of the changing environment.

In addition to online resources already available to support employers of apprentices and trainees, additional online resources have been made available to assist employers to navigate available support and options to keep apprentices and trainees employed and manage their training contract obligations during COVID-19. This has included a COVID-19 business assistance finder to help employers discover what support is available from the Australian and Queensland Governments and Queensland local councils.

DESBT regional offices conduct quarterly DESBT Reference Group (DRG) with a range of stakeholders to inform them of changes occurring across the diverse portfolio they are responsible for. The offices also undertake pro-active monitoring visits to new employers ensuring they are aware of their responsibilities and obligations to lessen any potential issues arising.

DESBT has engaged a network of 13 Industry Skills Advisors (ISAs) to provide high quality evidence-based industry advice and intelligence about current and emerging industry direction, regional skills need and training solutions, jobs growth and employment opportunities. The ISAs also help industry to more effectively contribute to government priority setting, and improve industry and employer understanding of skills pathways and training opportunities. All ISAs have established industry reference groups that focus on the needs of the VET supported workforce and valid advice to the department.

The department continues to provide regular updates to Skills Assure suppliers through the Contract Connector newsletter. Contract Connector assists providers to manage their obligations as Skills Assure suppliers and provides information on policy changes, fees and charges, declarations, hints and tips and more. The newsletter is distributed via email.

DETCConnect is an external web portal with four portlets used by different departmental clients to interact on four different business systems. It is a restricted site that connects industry partners with a number of departmental services via a single login to access secure information. This allows industry partners to receive current and relevant information by providing real time interaction with a number of departmental business systems. Leveraging technology systems has enhanced the ability to connect and communicate with multiple stakeholders in a timely way. For example, one of the portlets, Apprenticeships Info Self-Service provides information on Queensland registered apprentices and trainees including student awards.

VET modernisation program driving improvements

The department's VET systems currently operate as a collection of several core ICT systems and multiple ancillary applications. To improve system performance and reduce the risk of aging systems, the department established in 2020–21, a new VET Modernisation and Transformation Program that has been designed to leverage previous work undertaken and designed for delivery in stages over approximately five years. The project will modernise and then transform the systems to maximise the opportunity for process redesign that can adapt and change more easily as the broader VET system changes. This program will support the new technology ecosystem, using ICT best practice and industry standard approaches.



Building and supporting employee's capability

The department is committed to supporting employees to become effective and high-performing in their roles through a range of learning and development resources and opportunities and encourages continuous learning to remain effective and informed.

The responsibility for training departmental regional staff and customer centre staff resides with the department's Regional Directors and the Director, Customer Centre. This training is managed on behalf of Regional Directors by the Regional Director North Coast through the Core Skills Training Network. The department's central units regularly support this network through technical advice and guidance.

Regional staff have a dedicated web page of resource materials on the department's internal intranet for easy access from anywhere. This includes:

- onboarding information for staff to download and customise content and templates for new employees commencing in regional offices including pre-employment
- working with legislation including the FET Act, the *Human Rights Act 2019* and conducting investigations. The training materials include podcasts, articles and videos
- joining the department's Office 365 community and how to use channels for different applications, e.g. Microsoft Teams, SharePoint and Forms
- regional staff development capability framework. As topics and associated training resources are sourced and developed, they are added and linked
- learning about the department's regions
- list of resources sourced for Regional Staff Development purposes covering topics such as communication skills, using technology, customer service, effective recordkeeping, leadership, management and coaching, managing career development.

The development and review of these materials was a Regional Staff Development and Regional Collaboration Network joint project in 2020.

Model practice 5: Be transparent and accountable in actions



Supporting principles

- Where appropriate, regulatory frameworks and timeframes for making regulatory decisions are published to provide certainty to stakeholders.
- Decisions are provided in a timely manner, clearly articulating expectations and the underlying reasons for decisions.
- Indicators of regulator performance are publicly available.

Context: Timely decision-making, transparency and accountability

The FET Act outlines the timelines required for stakeholders and the department to respond to applications triggered by events that fall within the provisions of FET Act. This is one of the drivers for timely and transparent decision-making.

For example, Section 35A of the FET Act provides for the cancellation of a training contract upon application from one party to the contract. On receipt of the application, the chief executive must provide each party to the contract 14 days to respond to a show cause notice, and after that period has elapsed a decision can be made. In concert with this process, a department regional officer would contact the parties to clarify their position and determine whether mediation could assist in achieving a mutually agreeable outcome. Where an agreement cannot be obtained, then a decision is made after the FET Act timeframes are met.

In addition to being outlined in the FET Act, relevant timeframes are outlined in procedures and forms which are provided on the department's website.

Available data and statistics

The regulatory provisions of the FET Act are only a component of the administration of the apprenticeship and traineeship system, therefore reporting of the apprenticeship and traineeship occurs within the totality of the VET system. Data and statistics on Queensland apprenticeship and traineeship activity is available from several sources and the department publishes data and statistics regularly.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) publishes regular, online, national and jurisdictional comparative data for apprentices and trainees (www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/collections/apprentices-and-trainees-collection). NCVER also publishes an historical **time series** of apprenticeships and traineeships in Australia over several decades. This provides valuable comparative benchmarking information and is a useful resource for stakeholders. Due to lags in the reporting of apprentice and trainee data, NCVER publications are around six months after the period being reported.

The latest available figures show that for Queensland:

- as at 31 March 2021, there were 70,400 apprentices and trainees in-training; this is a 20.4% increase on March 2020.
- in the 12 months to 31 March 2021, there were 44,800 new commencements; an increase of 26.8% compared to the 12 months to 31 March 2020.
- apprentice and trainee completions reduced by 17.4% from 22,300 in the 12 months to 31 March 2020, to 18,400 in the 12 months to 31 March 2021.
- there were 3.9% fewer cancellations and withdrawals in the 12 months to 31 March 2021 (18,100) than the previous 12 months (18,900).



The Australian Productivity Commission publishes a Report on Government Services annually, which provides information on the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of government services in Australia. This includes a **chapter on vocational education and training** consisting of 11 indicators within the VET framework. This report also provides stakeholders and all jurisdictions with comparative benchmarking information on VET participation.

Other relevant information on apprenticeship and traineeship performance benchmarks can be obtained in the department's Annual Report, which is published on the department's website at: desbt.qld.gov.au/about-us/reports. The **2020–21 Annual Report** for the department reported there were approximately 63,600 apprentices and trainees in training across the state as at 31 December 2020, which represents 21.4 per cent of the national figure. This was the latest available data at the time of publication.

On the department's website (www.desbt.qld.gov.au/training/docs-data/statistics/training-performance/apprentices-trainees), **financial year apprentice and trainee statistics** are presented by the categories of new commencements, completions, and in-training. Two complementary excel products are also available on the website that allows users to filter apprentice, trainee, and school-based apprentice and trainee data by multiple measures across five financial years. Some of the filter options include provider type, Australian qualifications framework level, region, industry training group and demographics. Interpretative and background information for the different filter categories is also provided. Due to lags in the reporting of apprentice and trainee data, financial year figures are not finalised until six months after the financial year has ended.

Regular **monthly data** on apprenticeships and traineeships by regions is published to the Queensland open data portal at www.data.qld.gov.au/dataset/apprentice-trainee-in-training-quals-by-desbt-region.

Gaining insights

The data is important for monitoring outcomes and government's significant financial investment, as well as performance within the Queensland VET system. The data shows areas that may be performing well and areas requiring intervention in some way to improve performance. The availability of quality data is crucial for decision-makers to gain insights and make evidence-based decisions.

For example, some of the insights from the data tells us that:

- as at March 2021, new commencements in apprentice and trainee contracts in Queensland is at its highest rate for five years, and that almost 24% of all new commencements nationally were in Queensland.
- completions across the country have declined during the COVID-19 restrictions. However, Queensland has maintained its position as a national leader with approximately 25% of the national total in the 12 months to 31 March 2021 (18,400 out of 73,800). This strong performance is underpinned by key programs such as Back to Work, payroll tax apprentice and trainee rebate and the government's policy and funding of free apprenticeships across 139 priority qualifications for anyone under 21, which was expanded in January 2021 to include anyone under 25.
- Despite the difficulties faced by apprentices and trainees and their employers during the COVID-19 restrictions, cancellations and withdrawals in the 12 months to 31 March 2021 were at their lowest level for five years.



Variable factors

The department also looks at variables and factors that may impact data results and outcomes to enhance understanding of the complex VET system. For example, during 2020–21 the COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact the learning and working, environments of apprentices, trainees, employers and the department in several ways, e.g. social distancing requirements impacted the number of people in workplaces and classrooms; additional cleaning increased costs; ways of learning moved from in-person to online where possible, and lock-downs prevented people attending workplaces and provider facilities.

It should be noted there are many economic factors involved in the apprenticeship and traineeship statistics affecting recruitment to retention and ultimate employment. These include factors outside the control of the department such as performance of the broader labour market, confidence by employers to employ and the COVID-19 pandemic impacting small businesses as employers of apprentices and trainees.

Interventions

The department's interventions and levers to assist the apprenticeship and traineeship system include specific policies in subsidising and funding apprenticeships through various programs. As part of the government's plan to rebuild and grow the Queensland economy, the government committed in December 2020, in the 2020–21 budget, more than \$1 billion for training and skills initiatives focused on preparing Queenslanders for the jobs of the future. Much of this funding is being managed by the department in delivering a range of projects that will support new and existing apprentices, trainees and workers in local industries, including:

- \$200 million over four years for skills initiatives, including \$25 million over two years for Pre-Apprenticeship Support, \$8 million over two years for the Social Enterprise Jobs Fund, and \$5 million for the First Nations Training Strategy
- \$21 million to extend the Free TAFE for Year 12 graduates and free apprenticeships for under 21s programs to young Queenslanders under 25
- \$100 million in TAFE facilities across the state, commencing in 2021–22, to create high-quality training spaces tailored to deliver the skills local industry needs.

It should be noted that Queensland operates a demand-led system, meaning when there is a need from an employer for apprenticeships, those subsidies remain. Also, as apprenticeships take three to four years to complete, the data on completions reflects the number of completions in a particular year and what policy interventions occurred three-to four years prior, when the person commenced their apprenticeship and the levels and types of support available during the period of the apprenticeship. The data only provides a one-dimensional, aggregated perspective, making the supporting notes and insights informative to aid understanding.



Transparency and monitoring

Some of the key indicators that the department monitors and reports on through the Service Delivery Statements budget paper and annual report are the number of completions and satisfaction rates. The table below shows examples of some of these indicators and results, which at first glance appear as not meeting the targets previously estimated the year before, however, getting close to these ambitious targets is commended during a pandemic and reflects the collective effort by many stakeholders as well as the apprentices and trainees.

Measure	2020–21 Target/ Estimate	2020–21 Actual
Number of completions: apprenticeships	11,500	8,600
Meaning and insights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a measure of the number of Queensland apprentices who successfully completed their apprenticeship in 2020–21 which was 8,600; below the target estimate of 11,500. This variance between the 2020–21 target/estimate and the actual was impacted by COVID-19 global economic conditions impacting on employers and their ability to retain apprentices and provide work, which was consistent with the national results. For 12 months to September 2020, based on the latest available national data, Queensland led the country at over 25 per cent of the national total. 		
Number of completions: traineeships	13,500	9,600
Meaning and insights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is a measure of the number of Queensland trainees who successfully completed their traineeship in 2020–21, which was 9,600; below the target estimate of 13,500. Traineeships have been supplemented through the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, managed by the department, which is a \$420 million commitment over six years from 2015–16 until 2020–21 and incorporates traineeship programs. This variance between the 2020–21 target/estimate and the actual was due to COVID-19 economic conditions impacting on employers and is consistent with national results. 		
Number of completions: school-based apprenticeships and traineeships	5,000	3,500
Meaning and Insights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This measures the number of Queensland school-based apprentices and trainees who successfully completed their apprenticeship or traineeship in 2020–21, which was 3,500; below the target estimate of 5,000. 		

Measure	2020–21 Target/ Estimate	2020–21 Actual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This variance between the 2020–21 target/estimate and the actual was directly related to changeable labour market conditions due to the impact of COVID-19 in the retail, tourism and hospitality sectors, which have traditionally been significant employers of school-based trainees. 		
Proportion of employers satisfied with graduates of: apprenticeships and traineeships	83%	77.6%
<p>Meaning and Insights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This measures the proportion of employers using apprentices and trainees who are satisfied with the training as a way of meeting their skill needs. Employer satisfaction estimates are obtained from the biennial national survey Employers' Use and Views of The Vet System, which was last conducted by NCVET in 2019. This variance between the 2020–21 target/estimate and the actual was reflective of difficult economic conditions negatively impacting on the market to provide stable employment opportunities, which are key to the apprenticeship and traineeship market. The variance reflects a national trend of lower satisfaction with apprenticeship training, reported at 77.6 % nationally. 		



Appendix 1: Information, contacts and feedback

Apprenticeship and traineeship information and contacts

Australian Apprenticeship Support Network

- telephone 13 38 73
- visit australianapprenticeships.gov.au

Queensland Training Ombudsman

To make an enquiry or lodge a complaint, contact the Queensland Training Ombudsman:

- telephone: 1800 773 048
- email: info@qto.qld.gov.au
- post: PO Box 15090, City East Qld 4002
- visit website to download a form:
<https://trainingombudsman.qld.gov.au/contact/>

DESBT

- website: desbt.qld.gov.au/training/apprentices
- telephone: 1800 210 210
- email: apprenticeshipinfo@qld.gov.au

Feedback

Any feedback about this report can be directed to:

Queensland Apprenticeship and Traineeship Office
Service Delivery, Engagement
Department of Employment, Small Business and Training
PO Box 15483, City East, Brisbane QLD 4002.

- telephone: 1300 369 935
- email: training@desbt.qld.gov.au

Appendix 2: Glossary

The meanings of the following acronyms and/or abbreviations used in this report are listed below.

Acronym/Abbreviation	Meaning
AASN	Australian Apprenticeship Support Network
ASQA	Australian Skills Quality Authority
DESBT	Department of Employment, Small Business and Training
DRG	DESBT Reference Group
ERA	employer resource assessments
FET Act	<i>Further Education and Training Act 2014</i>
the Framework	The Queensland Government's Regulator Performance Framework
GTO	Group Training Organisation
ISA	Industry Skills Advisors
LHLQ	Labour Hire Licensing Queensland
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
PEO	Principal Employer Organisation
QATO	Queensland Apprenticeship and Traineeship Office
QTO	Queensland Training Ombudsman
RG	Reference Group
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SMS	Short Message Service
SRTO	Supervising Registered Training Organisation
VET	vocational education and training

