



# MEDIA RELEASE

28 July 2021

## Story of how business dealt with COVID crisis provides a wake-up call for VET sector

Australia has been given a wake-up call about the place of the vocational education and training system in meeting the critical needs of industry and the workforce in dealing with the COVID crisis.

A report by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), [\*'The impact of COVID-19 on industry innovation, skills and need for training'\*](#) reveals that businesses do not appear to have relied on the vocational training system to help steer them through the worst of the pandemic.

The NCVER research was aimed at identifying how businesses innovated in their practices or markets to remain financially viable during the pandemic and whether the VET sector assisted them to equip their staff for these changes

The report says that businesses generally “adapted” to changing conditions during the pandemic, rather than “innovated”, and that only a limited amount of training was required, with most staff able to transfer their existing skills to any new tasks.

“Where training was undertaken, it was mostly unaccredited and done informally on-the-job or via free online training,” the NCVER report said.

Where accredited training was used, such as in the aged care sector, it tended to be conducted online.

Of the 17 business innovations identified in the report, owners saw a role for VET in just three. Dialogue with companies revealed that many relied on internal training or that provided by suppliers, even for new entrants.

TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) CEO Craig Robertson said the NCVER has done the sector a favour by shining a light on the place of VET during one of the biggest crises in a generation.

“Even if a small selection of employers is not seeing a role for VET as currently offered at the direction of their industry associations, it points to the need for change,” he said.

On a positive note, some owners felt there was a strong role for VET as the industries “need an injection of external knowledge and ideas.”

“This is the role played by TAFEs all the time, but the reams of regulatory requirements in qualifications means the real needs of employers cannot always be met,” Mr Robertson said.

“If there is one message from this report thanks to NCVER, it’s the need to facilitate local connections between TAFEs and businesses to meet real needs.”

Mr Robertson said he will be interested in the policy response of the federal department to the findings of this report, as it has carriage of VET qualifications policy which gives rise to the circumstances where qualifications do not match needs of employers.

**Media contact:** Bob Bowden, Foresight Communications, [bbowden@bowmac.com.au](mailto:bbowden@bowmac.com.au) 0412 753 298

TAFE Directors Australia is the peak national body representing 28 TAFE institutes, including six dual sector universities with TAFE divisions and nine TAFEs that are also non-university higher education providers.