



State Government of Victoria

1 Treasury Place
Melbourne Victoria 3002
Telephone: +61 3 9651 5000

BRI22108927

Ms Pam White PSM
Chair
Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority
GPO Box 2317
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Dear Ms White

We are pleased to provide the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) with this Statement of Expectations (SOE), which applies from 1 November 2022 onwards until renewed.

As Minister for Education, Minister for Training and Skills and Minister for Higher Education, and together with the Minister for Trade, we are responsible for administering the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (the Act), which provides for a high standard of education and training for all Victorian students, including by setting out the functions and powers of the VRQA. This SOE should be read in the context of the objectives, obligations and functions outlined in the Act.

This SOE introduces new expectations of the VRQA by the Minister for Training and Skills and Minister for Higher Education regarding **Apprenticeships and Traineeships**. It makes no change to the expectations of the VRQA by the Minister for Education about **Home Schooling** and **Schools**. These latter expectations remain the same as in the previous SOE which applied from 1 July 2021.

Recent consultations with apprentices, trainees and other key stakeholders including industry, employers and unions have indicated there is a real need to significantly strengthen our systems of protection for apprentices and trainees in Victoria.

The new expectations seek to urgently reinforce and strengthen the key role the VRQA must play through the exercise of its regulatory functions to ensure apprentices and trainees, many of whom are among the youngest and most vulnerable of workers, work in an environment that provides for their physical and psychosocial safety.

Based on recent consultation between the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the VRQA regarding the Government's priorities and emerging risks in apprenticeships and traineeships, our expectations for the VRQA are outlined in **Attachment A** of this letter. The VRQA should incorporate appropriate milestones and actions into its business plans to implement these new expectations, noting the context of its legislative authority. VRQA should also provide the Minister for Training and Skills with a detailed timeframe of when it expects these to be delivered and updates on progress achieved. We note the need for ongoing collaboration with apprentices, trainees, industry, employers, unions, other regulators and DET.

We further request the VRQA to undertake a regular review of all the expectations in this letter as part of its annual reporting obligations and to advise us if there are any refinements recommended when the letter needs to be updated or renewed.

We thank you for this ongoing, important work to strengthen our apprenticeship and traineeship system, so that Victorians can be safe in training and at work and go on to rewarding jobs and careers.

Kind regards



The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP
Minister for Education
Minister for Women



The Hon Gayle Tierney MP
Minister for Training and Skills
Minister for Higher Education
Minister for Agriculture

Attachment A – Ministerial Expectations

Home schooling	
Compliance Related Assistance and Advice	
1.	We expect the VRQA will increase home schooling parents’ understanding of requirements for registration and review. The VRQA should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. continue to co-create policies, guides, advice and general communication with the home schooling community, through the Victorian Home Education Advisory Committee b. strengthen its resource library to help families address the learning areas and enrich their educational programs c. ensure the VRQA can contribute to future evaluations of the new regulations, including the evaluation of new home school regulations over 2018-20, by working with DET to develop evidence of the longer-term educational attainment of home schooled students as outlined in the Regulatory Impact Statement (2017).
Timeliness	
2.	We expect the VRQA to provide clarity about the scheduling of home schooling reviews and publish the amount of time taken to complete a review (across all methods) in its Quarterly Home Schooling Reporting.
Schools	
Compliance-related assistance and advice	
3.	We expect the VRQA to support the goal of improving compliance with, and understanding of, the minimum standards across all Victorian schools. We expect the VRQA will contribute to this outcome by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. providing effective, practical and ongoing assistance and advice on compliance with the minimum standards to schools. The VRQA should regularly review and update guidance based on feedback from school reviews and other relevant reports and reviews. b. continue to work with DET to facilitate the Government’s commitment to build new schools and reduce regulatory burden for all government schools by identifying departmental policies that can be universally applied for new and ongoing school registration, where it is appropriate to do so.
Clear and consistent regulatory activities	
4.	We expect the VRQA to support effective and consistent application of the minimum standards across and within sectors by taking a leadership role in simplifying compliance for schools. To support this expectation, the VRQA should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. clearly define the evidence to be used by school reviewers to assess and determine compliance and provide review bodies with VRQA policies, checklists and other assistance to drive consistency in reviews (including identifying the essential elements required in school documentation such as policies). The VRQA should support consistent reviewer training across sectors on how reviewers assess compliance with the minimum standards b. consider any other issues or themes raised in relevant reports and reviews that will inform improved practices with respect to clear, supportive and consistent regulation of Victorian schools. c. further develop the Review Body Assurance Program, including a mechanism for evaluation which will support effective and consistent application of the minimum standards.
Apprenticeships and Traineeships	
Compliance-related assistance and advice	
5.	We expect the VRQA to significantly enhance confidence in the administration and quality of the apprenticeship and traineeship system and encourage the participation of apprentices, trainees and their employers. To meet this expectation, the VRQA should: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. significantly improve employers’ awareness of their roles, responsibilities and legal and regulatory obligations in taking on and supporting apprentices and trainees, with the goal of supporting individuals to complete their training b. significantly improve VRQA visibility and improve employer, apprentice and trainee awareness and understanding of the VRQA’s role and responsibility in the administration and enforcement of apprenticeship and traineeship obligations including greater clarity of its legal and regulatory frameworks c. support the expansion of A&T options into new and emerging industries and consult, as necessary, with DET and other agencies, including industry stakeholders in approving training schemes to ensure appropriate durations and relevance to industry d. continue to recognise and monitor Group Training Organisations against National Standards and report on compliance e. increase collaboration and cooperation with other regulators represented on its Operational Working Group and DET to develop an information portal for employers and apprentices to publish regulatory actions and provide information about regulatory requirements f. work with other relevant regulators and the department to identify a more streamlined complaints resolution approach across the regulatory system for apprentices and trainees g. continue to support the implementation of relevant budget initiatives.
Timeliness	
6.	We expect the VRQA to ensure the timing and scope of regulatory activities relating to apprenticeships and traineeships are clear and efficient.
Clear and consistent regulatory activities	

7. We expect that the VRQA will continue to lift the quality of apprenticeships and traineeships in Victoria, contributing to improved completion outcomes, by administering consistent and reliable monitoring and education with a particular focus apprentice and trainee cohorts who require additional safeguards from physical and other harms. To contribute to these outcomes, the VRQA should:
- a. collaborate with WorkSafe and other relevant regulators to assess the risk associated with employers of apprentices and trainees (regarding the suitability of employers) and inform compliance and enforcement activities
 - b. focus monitoring and compliance activities in relation to employers with consistently poor outcomes (such as low levels of completion, high cancellations, dissatisfaction and safety concerns) and considering carefully where issues have been identified with employers by other regulators
 - c. continue to work with DET on reforms to school-based apprenticeships and traineeships
 - d. review and revise its practice in relation to employer approvals and revocations to ensure it has a current assessment of the fitness of an employer to engage an apprentice or trainee
 - e. strengthen training plan arrangements by informing minimum requirements for training plans and review its approach to the oversight and monitoring of training plans over the life of a training contract
 - f. review its practice related to labour hire arrangements, and publish a policy on its future approach
 - g. review its delivery of regulatory field services to ensure the best possible outcomes from these services, with a view to insourcing these services going forward
 - h. work with the Department of Education and Training to develop outcome metrics to better monitor the effectiveness of the regulatory regime