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Pam White PSM
Chair
Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority
GPO Box 2317
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Dear Ms White

Pam

We are pleased to provide the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) with this Statement of Expectations (SOE), which applies from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2021 unless otherwise amended.

Improving the administration and enforcement of regulation

As Minister for Education, Minister for Training and Skills and Minister for Higher Education, alongside the Minister for Jobs, Innovation and 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.

We acknowledge the critical role that the VRQA plays as the regulator of education and training providers in Victoria. We recognise the VRQA's achievement in progressing the expectations set out in the previous SOE issued on 9 January 2018, including the successful implementation of home schooling regulations and supporting school expulsion reforms in government schools.

We recognise the joint work between the Department of Education and Training (DET) and VRQA to roll out the Head Start initiative, providing greater opportunities for school students to undertake apprenticeships and traineeships.

Additionally, we acknowledge the work of the VRQA in responding to the McClellan *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* in relation to boarding facilities and the VRQA's efforts to embed the child safe standards in Victorian schools. We also note that the Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) has recently released its report into *School compliance with Victoria's child safe standards*. The report has identified a range of recommendations to better support schools to comply with the standards and emphasised the need for the VRQA to play a stronger regulatory role in defining a consistent compliance framework for implementation of the Child Safe Standards, including compliance with Ministerial Order No. 870.

The DET *Statement of Expectations Evaluation Report: VRQA SOE 2018-2019* demonstrates progress in the provision of compliance-related information for schools relating to the standards, as well as opportunities for continuous improvement. There have also been improvements in the identification of contract training risks for Victorian apprentices and trainees.

We also acknowledge the VRQA's ongoing role in supporting the Government's Education State reform agenda. This SOE letter supports the VRQA to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of regulatory activities and to initiate and maintain ongoing collaboration with other agencies including DET, the Victorian Skills Commissioner, Local Jobs First Commissioner, Labour Hire Commissioner and WorkSafe. We also expect the VRQA will continue to support and advise the Government's policy agenda as appropriate, including (but not limited to) the implementation of the 'Quality apprenticeships to drive job opportunities in the modern economy' 2018-19 Budget initiative, Trade Papers and DET-led work to implement the 'Higher apprenticeships' 2019-20 Budget initiative.

Improvements and targets

Attachment A of this letter outlines priority governance and performance objectives aimed at continuous improvement in the administration and enforcement of regulation. These expectations are based on consultation between DET and the VRQA and also on the findings from the *Statement of Expectations Evaluation Report: VRQA SOE 2018-2019*. In responding to these expectations, the VRQA should consider the implications of the VAGO findings and other relevant reviews that may impact the administration and enforcement of regulation such as the Victorian Government's Response to the McClellan Royal Commission and the Department of Health and Human Services Review of the child safe standards.

Reporting

We note that as part of the Statement of Expectations Framework for Regulators, departmental evaluation of regulatory performance against the SOE and public reporting against performance objectives in **Attachment A** is mandatory. We expect that the VRQA will continue to consistently collect and publish the relevant baseline data found in the *Statement of Expectations Evaluation Report: VRQA SOE 2018-2019* to facilitate future evaluations unless otherwise agreed, as well as any new data required to effectively evaluate this SOE. This data should also be published in the annual report as part of the progress reporting against the SOE and incorporated in the VRQA Strategic Plan. The VRQA should also consider other measures in addition to those in **Attachment A** to improve and support regulatory activities and ensure that the findings are representative of schools across all sectors.

We thank you for your ongoing, important work in supporting Victoria to build a world class education system, and we look forward to receiving the VRQA's response.

Kind regards



The Hon James Merlino MP
Deputy Premier
Minister for Education

2.9.19



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

Attachment A – Ministerial Expectations

Home schooling	
Compliance Related Assistance and Advice	Measures
<p>1. We expect the VRQA will increase home schooling parents' understanding of requirements for registration and review. The VRQA should:</p> <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 by 30 June 2021, as outlined in the Regulatory Impact Statement (2017). 	<p>Trend analysis of key metrics as outlined in the evaluation plan.</p>
Timeliness	Measures
<p>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.</p>	<p>New measures include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Number of days taken to notify a parent of the outcome of the review from the date the review started (by method of review).</i>
Schools	
Compliance-related assistance and advice	Measures
<p>3. We expect the VRQA to support the goal of improving compliance with, and understanding of, the minimum standards (including Child Safe Standards), across all Victorian schools. We expect the VRQA will contribute to this outcome by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. providing effective, practical and ongoing assistance and advice on compliance with the minimum standards (including Child Safe 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. 	<p>Trend analysis of key metrics as outlined in the evaluation plan.</p> <p>New measures include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>% of independent schools that state they require further help and support in complying with the Minimum Standards.</i>
Clear and consistent regulatory activities	Measures
<p>4. We expect the VRQA to support effective and consistent application of the minimum standards (including Child Safe Standards) across and within sectors and take a leadership role in simplifying compliance for schools. To support this expectation, the VRQA should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. work closely with the Department to implement all actions arising out of the 2019 Victorian Auditor General review of "School Compliance with Victoria's Child Safe Standards" to support Victorian schools in ensuring child safety and compliance. This includes improving governance arrangements, compliance framework and the supporting systems, guidance, policies and resources. b. 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 	<p>Trend analysis of key metrics as outlined in the evaluation plan.</p> <p>New measures include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>% of independent schools that strongly agree that the requirements, including evidence required, to comply with the minimum standards are clear and consistent.</i>

<p>sectors on how reviewers assess compliance with the minimum standards (including Child Safe Standards).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Support DET with the development of regulations for boarding facilities. d. 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. e. further develop the 'hot review' program, including a mechanism for evaluation, which will support effective and consistent application of the minimum standards (including Child Safe Standards). 	
Apprenticeships and Traineeships	
Compliance-related assistance and advice	Measures
<p>5. We expect the VRQA to 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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 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 b. support the expansion of A&T options into new and emerging industries and consult, as necessary, with DET and other agencies, including the Victorian Skills Commissioner in approving training schemes to ensure appropriate nominal durations and relevance to industry c. continue to recognise and monitor Group Training Organisations against National Standards and report on compliance d. continue to support the implementation of relevant budget initiatives, such as the 'Quality apprenticeships to drive job opportunities in the modern economy' 2018-19 Budget initiative, Trade papers and DET-led work to implement the 'Higher apprenticeships' 2019-20 Budget initiative, through the provision of high-quality guidance and advice. 	<p>Trend analysis of key metrics as outlined in the evaluation plan.</p>
Timeliness	Measures
<p>6. We expect the VRQA to ensure the timing and scope of regulatory activities relating to apprenticeships and traineeships are clear and efficient. Specifically, the VRQA should include guidance and advice regarding the timing of the Trade Paper application process along with the guidance and advice required in the Ministerial Directions signed 8 August 2018 and 30 October 2018.</p>	<p>New measures include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Number of Trade Papers issued (by occupation).</i> 2. <i>The number of days taken to issue Trade Papers once application is received.</i>
Risk-based strategies	Measures
<p>7. We expect that the VRQA will continue to lift the quality of apprenticeships and traineeships in Victoria by administering consistent and reliable monitoring and assessment with a particular focus on high-risk apprenticeship cohorts. To contribute to these outcomes, the VRQA should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. collaborate with WorkSafe in relation to employers of apprentices and trainees (regarding the suitability of employers) and report on actions and outcomes in its acquittal of actions under this statement of expectations 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 ensure that all planned visits and campaign work is informed by a risk-based approach c. continue to work with DET on reforms to school-based apprenticeships and traineeships d. implement a functional apprenticeship and traineeship database (Epsilon) that will produce accurate, secure, and timely data to inform risk-based strategies by 30 June 2020. 	<p>Trend analysis of key metrics as outlined in the evaluation plan.</p> <p>New measures include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Number of cancellations (by type).</i> 2. <i>Number of Planned Visits undertaken and their outcomes.</i>

New measures are italicised and are intended to establish a baseline for future evaluations.