



## The Hon Gayle Tierney MP

Minister for Training and Skills  
Minister for Higher Education

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The Hon Daniel Andrews MP  
Premier of Victoria  
1 Treasury Place  
Melbourne 3002

Dear Premier

### **MINISTER FOR TRAINING AND SKILLS, MINISTER FOR HIGHER EDUCATION – TRAVEL TO EUROPE**

Following my travel to Finland, the United Kingdom (UK) and Belgium from 30 November to 14 December 2019, I enclose my Travel Outcomes Report. The report details key outcomes from my visit, as well as an estimation of the costs incurred by my office.

As outlined in my previous correspondence, the purpose of my travel was to examine best-practice post-secondary education and training systems to inform the development of similar approaches and policies in Victoria. In particular, the trip focused on the following three themes:

- aligning skills and jobs to support government priorities and ensuring vocational education and training (VET) responds to the demands of employers and industry
- creating a more joined-up post-secondary education and training system with clear and flexible pathways between higher education and VET
- providing pathways for disadvantaged groups into training and jobs and ensuring students are adequately supported through education and training.

The study tour was very successful and resulted in a number of important learnings that will inform policies and reviews in Victoria, including the Review of Vocational and Applied Learning in Victorian Post-Secondary Education, the Review into Vocational and Applied Learning Pathways in Senior Secondary Schooling, TAFE reform as well as input into national VET reform.

Meetings with various organisations in each country, including post-secondary education and training providers, government bodies and industry representatives, provided valuable insights into the impact of education and training policies and reforms in those jurisdictions. In Finland and the UK, I was joined by a small delegation of sector representatives, which generated multi-faceted conversations.

In Finland, I gained insights into how their skills forecasting model has increased connectivity in the Finnish post-secondary education and training system, including through the Skills Anticipation Forum. I also learned about the positive community perceptions of VET in Finland and the opportunities and challenges brought about by Finland's 2018 VET reforms.

In England, I enhanced my understanding of their new T Level model, an alternative technical secondary study stream consisting primarily of classroom-based learning with industry placements. I also witnessed first-hand the effects of funding cuts on the further education sector and the shift to an employer-led VET system.

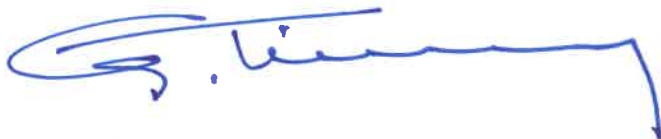
My meetings in Scotland were incredibly valuable, as I learned about the similarities and challenges shared by our systems. I gained insights into Scotland's regional skills forecasting and careers services, which allow for better alignment between education and training delivery and the needs of individuals and industry. It has also improved pathways between VET and higher education and increased access for disadvantaged communities.

In Belgium, I met with the European Commission's Director-General of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, who provided valuable insights into the European Union's role in guiding and funding member states' skills development systems.

Pending your consideration and approval, the Travel Outcomes Report will be published on the Department of Education and Training website in accordance with the *Guidelines for Official Ministerial Overseas Travel*.

I look forward to receiving your response to this report and engaging further with the delegates to apply the key lessons of the travel in Victoria.

Yours sincerely



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

**11 FEB 2020**



## OFFICIAL MINISTERIAL OVERSEAS TRAVEL Outcomes Report

The provision of the information below is consistent with the *Guidelines for Official Ministerial Overseas Travel*. This report must be sent to the Premier within 40 working days of return, and published on the relevant department website within 60 working days of the Minister's return. The published version of the report does not need to include the 'next steps / follow up' section or the Premier's signature.

<b>Name of Department / Agency</b>	Department of Education and Training		
<b>Departmental / Agency Contact</b>	Brett Michael, Director, Tertiary Education Policy		
<b>Telephone Number</b>	03 7022 1644		
<b>TRAVEL DETAILS</b>			
<b>Minister's Name</b>	The Hon.Minister Gayle Tierney		
<b>Portfolio/s</b>	Training and Skills; Higher Education		
<b>Did the Minister's spouse accompany the Minister in an official capacity?</b>	<b>YES</b> (official capacity) <input type="checkbox"/> (private capacity) <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>YES</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>NO</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Accompanying Ministerial staff</b>	Ms Cath Whelan, Chief of Staff		
<b>Countries visited</b>	Finland, United Kingdom, Belgium		
<b>Date of travel</b>	30 November – 14 December 2019		
<b>Number of official travel days (include day of departure and day of return)</b>	15		
<b>Funding source (list Department/s or Agency)</b>	Department of Education and Training		
<b>EXPENSES</b>		<b>\$</b>	
<i>Include combined expenses for Minister, accompanying staff and spouse (if accompanying in an official capacity)</i>			
<b>Air fares (including taxes and fees)</b>	35,492		
<b>Accommodation (including taxes and fees)</b>	10,413		
<b>Other expenses (including surface travel and travel allowances)</b>	10,766		

Travel cost for Minister and ministerial staff ( <i>and spouse or de facto partner if applicable</i> )	56,671
Are the above costs final and complete?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

### Purpose of travel

From 30 November to 14 December 2019, I travelled to Helsinki, London, Preston, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Brussels in my capacity as Minister for Training and Skills and Minister for Higher Education.

The purpose of the trip was to examine best-practice post-secondary education and training systems to inform the development of similar approaches and policies in Victoria. In particular, the trip focused on the following three themes:

1. Aligning skills and jobs to support government priorities and ensuring VET responds to the demands of employers and industry
2. Creating a more joined-up post-secondary education and training system with clear and flexible pathways between higher education and VET
3. Providing pathways for disadvantaged groups into training and jobs and ensuring students are adequately supported through education and training.

The itinerary addressed these objectives through meetings and site visits to post-secondary education and training providers, government bodies and industry representatives in each country.

For the Finland and UK legs of the trip, I was also accompanied by a small delegation of representatives from the Victorian education and training sector.

### Benefits of travel to the State of Victoria

Meetings and site visits to organisations in Finland, the United Kingdom and Belgium provided valuable insights into best-practice post-secondary education and training systems.

In terms of key outcomes, the travel:

- Underscored that all jurisdictions are facing **universal challenges** in their post-secondary education and training systems, including:
  - aligning the education and training system to government and economic priorities
  - improving community perceptions of VET
  - appropriately engaging industry in skills development
  - creating an apprenticeship system that responds to the needs of industry and is understood by the wider community.
- Provided unique insight into different **skills forecasting** models used across Europe. In Finland, skills forecasting is primarily supported through the Skills Anticipation Forum, which promotes the interaction between the sector, government and industry. In Scotland, skills forecasting is used to inform careers advice. In both jurisdictions, the data for skills forecasting is provided by an external organisation independent from government, and the evidence base used in forecasting is agreed upon by all stakeholders. Elements of these skills forecasting models may inform performance-based funding in Victoria.

- Provided examples of different responses to community **perceptions of VET** as a less desirable option compared to higher education. Meetings, including those in Finland, highlighted the importance of having a highly qualified and respected VET teacher cohort to improve such perceptions.
- Highlighted the importance of **broad-based qualifications** to ensure ongoing relevance, particularly in rapidly changing fields. Such qualifications teach students to learn, as seen in Finland's recent reforms, as opposed to teaching current technology or work practices which may become obsolete. In areas of demand, micro-credentials could be used to deliver job-specific technical skills quickly. However, micro-credentials should not act as substitutes for full qualifications and it is important to ensure training quality.
- Highlighted the importance of **lifelong learning** to ensure the existing workforce is trained and retrained to match shifting industry needs. An important element of lifelong learning is community-based adult education. Meetings in Finland and Belgium provided examples of successful community initiatives in engaging disadvantaged adult learners.
- Showcased several outstanding examples of **place-based education and training precincts** where education and training stakeholders are co-located, such as in Finland. Such precincts support more coordinated linkages with industry and local government and offer disadvantaged communities better access to meaningful training.
- Emphasised the importance of **engaging all stakeholders** in implementing reforms. The most successful post-secondary education and training systems were in jurisdictions in which all relevant stakeholders, including unions, were visible and actively engaged.

#### **Finland**

Examples of my key engagements and outcomes in Finland include:

- A meeting with the **Finnish National Agency for Education**, the government organisation responsible for Finland's skills anticipation model. The meeting provided useful insights into how Finland forecasts its future skills needs, such as the Skills Anticipation Forum.
- Meetings with the **Government of Finland** and the **Trade Union of Education in Finland**. These meetings provided different perspectives on the VET reforms Finland implemented in 2018. The discussions revealed widespread commitment to the principles of reform, resulting from extensive stakeholder engagement. The significant role of unions and the labour movement as reform partners with government and the education sector was particularly notable. I was also interested to learn about the high regard for the VET teaching profession and VET more broadly within Finland.
- Site visits to **Metropolia University of Applied Sciences** and **Omnia**, a vocational education institute. The visits provided insight into the strong connections between schools, VET and higher education in Finland, including through co-location and clear pathways. The visits also improved my understanding of the more structured nature of workplace learning in Finland.

## England

Examples of my key engagements and outcomes in England include:

- A meeting with **SafeLives**, a non-profit organisation providing family violence training to frontline professionals. It highlighted the importance of embedding specialist expertise and genuine empathy not only into family violence training delivery, but also into responses to other social policy issues.
- A meeting and tour of **London South Bank University**, a former polytechnic university. The meeting provided insights into the University's broad industry engagement approach, including their degree apprenticeship model, partnerships with schools, innovation and entrepreneur hubs and co-location with business.
- A meeting with the **Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education**, which enhanced my understanding of the new T Level model, an alternative technical secondary study stream consisting primarily of classroom-based learning with industry placements.
- Meetings with the **Association of Colleges**, a non-profit peak body representing further education colleges in England, and **London South East Colleges**. These meetings highlighted the commitment at individual and organisational levels in the further education sector despite difficulties, including funding cuts and the shift to an employer-led vocational education and training system.
- Visits to the **BAE Systems Academy for Skills and Knowledge** and **BAE Systems at Govan Shipyard** (Glasgow, Scotland). These visits provided insights into how large businesses can be better engaged in education and training provision, including partnerships with public providers.

## Scotland

Examples of my key engagements and outcomes in Scotland include:

- A meeting with the Scottish Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, **Mr John Swinney MSP**. The discussion centred around the Government's successful *Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy*. I learned that pathways between schools, colleges and universities greatly contributed to the reduction in unemployment, as well as feeding reliable data on skills shortages into planning.
- A tour of **City of Glasgow College**, a high-quality vocational education and training provider. At the College, I was briefed by representatives of **Skills Development Scotland**, which is aligning skills needs with delivery through skills forecasting and quality careers advice provided to people at all stages of life. I was also joined by representatives of **Colleges Scotland**, who provided broader context of the colleges sector.
- A meeting with the **Scottish Funding Council**, the government body responsible for funding post-secondary education and training institutions. The meeting provided insight into their use of regional Outcomes Agreements with institutions, which outline delivery plans and targets tied to funding. The meeting also highlighted the need to devolve discussions, particularly around skills gaps, to local areas and regions.

## Belgium

Examples of my key engagements and outcomes in Belgium include:

- A meeting with **MolenGeek**, a public-private social partnership offering a full-time, six-month IT course to disadvantaged youth. The visit highlighted the importance of offering non-traditional pathways for disengaged groups and private enterprises partnering with public organisations to address specific skills gaps.
- A meeting with the **European Commission** Director-General of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. The meeting provided insights into the role of the European Union in guiding and funding member states' policymaking in skills development. I also learned about other examples of best-practice vocational education and training systems, such as in the Basque region of Spain.
- A visit to the **Cochlear Technology Centre**, the European learning and development headquarters of an Australian company with links to research, industry and post-secondary education and training in Belgium. The meeting highlighted the necessity of structured and consistent engagement between universities and businesses on course design and delivery.

## Next Steps / Follow Up

Key observations and findings from the travel will be used to inform relevant reviews, including the Review of Vocational and Applied Learning in Victorian Post-Secondary Education and the Review into Vocational and Applied Learning Pathways in Senior Secondary Schooling. It will also be used to input into the Council of Australian Governments national VET reform roadmap.

The study tour provided a valuable learning experience and allowed me to develop relationships with key international networks. I intend to maintain an ongoing dialogue with these partners through my office and the Department of Education and Training, to promote best practice in post-secondary education and training in Victoria.

Noted by Department Secretary (Signature)	
Name	Jenny Atta Secretary, Department of Education and Training
Date	6/2/20
Approved by Minister (Signature)	
Name	The Hon. Gayle Tierney Minister for Training and Skills, Minister for Higher Education
Date	11/2/20

