

27 October 2009

**Response from General Manager, National Audit and Registration Agency, to 2009 NCVER audit against the AQTF State and Territory Registering Body Standards**

An audit by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) of NARA's compliance with the AQTF Standards for State and Territory Registering Bodies took place in August this year. The final report was received in late September and provided to all Registering Bodies which have enacted delegations to TVET Australia and where RTOs are having their audit and registration activities managed by NARA.

The report found NARA compliant with the AQTF Standards. I am proud of the efforts of NARA staff, auditors and our endorsed Quality Consultants in achieving this consistent level of compliance and for the numerous strengths identified in the report. In summary, these include NARA's:

- pool of auditors and endorsed Quality Consultants and the wealth of experience they bring from across different jurisdictions – allowing peer-to-peer benchmarking and a nationally consistent regulatory approach;
- use of a proportionate regulatory approach and specifically the work NARA does to engage RTOs at an early stage;
- Client Relationship Management approach and regular auditor moderation activities;
- efforts to support its auditors and resolve any emerging issues of inconsistency with required practice;
- active management and commitment to the style and content of its audit reports;
- approach to allowing RTO's the opportunity to 'fact check' audit reports;
- pro-active approach to dealing with clients and stakeholders;
- pattern of engagement with key industry bodies and regulators;
- flexibility in responding to complaints;
- excellent document control procedures
- published service standards; and
- systematic, pro-active approach to continuous improvement.

The audit also identified a small number of areas where opportunities for improvement exist. These are detailed below and my commitment to tackling them is also outlined:

1. NARA may benefit from one or two strategic benchmarking exercises with other sectors for some of its operational issues (such as techniques to ensure more consistent reports).

*NARA Response: The National Quality Council's National Consistency Action Group is presently overseeing a suite of benchmarking activities by the State and Territory Registering Bodies and*

*NARA. NARA is leading work with Western Australia and the ACT on processes for registration and re-registration. NARA will continue to explore other benchmarking opportunities in 2010.*

2. While NARA is clearly managing the few complaints raised about RTOs, the complaints register was not up-to-date with all of the complaints received.

*NARA Response: NARA considers this to be a very important issue and moved to address it immediately this was identified during the audit. The complaints register is now fully up-to-date and a re-structure of NARA's operations has also taken place, with the Operations Manager and the rest of the administration team now reporting to one of NARA's Senior Client Relationship Managers to ensure greater oversight of the administration team.*

3. The challenge for NARA is to maintain current service standards as the client base increases. It may benefit from considering technical solutions to address some of these demands. The CRM database, with a good inbuilt reporting function should simplify some aspects of data collection.

*NARA Response: This matter will be addressed as part of the development of a TVET Australia ICT Strategy for 2010 and beyond, currently under development by the Chief Information Officer.*

4. NARA may want to consider the use of 'social networking' software to inform stakeholders of issues or seek feedback soon after they happen. NARA is taking a leadership and advocacy path to further nationally consistent regulation. It may wish to consider a 'Think Tank' blog where the leaders of the sector have access to express their views regarding ongoing national regulation issues.

*NARA Response: NARA will review this matter in 2010 in consultation with the National Quality Council's National Consistency Action Group and the State and Territory Registering Bodies it has delegations from.*

5. While documents are maintained within a document management system, there is one difference in nomenclature with reference to either 12 month or post-initial audit in NARA's internal documentation.

*NARA Response: NARA is confident its staff and auditors understand the use of both terms but will review its internal nomenclature and ensure a consistent approach.*

6. NARA may benefit from a more systematic approach to actively conduct and encourage other types of stakeholder feedback. This could include a prompt on the website or indeed every page of the website to encourage feedback relevant to that area.

*NARA Response: NARA intends conducting a regular, annual survey commencing in 2009 of all RTOs registered with it and a broad group of stakeholders as a means of ensuring more consistent feedback in addition to the post-audit feedback it currently collects. Any changes to the NARA website will be considered as part of the development of TVET Australia's broader strategic ICT plan referred to above.*

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