



I am delighted to report that NARA was officially launched by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, The Hon. Julia Gillard, MP at the start of this month. Minister Gillard was joined by the Hon. Jacinta Allan MP, Victorian Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation. More than 120 RTO managers and key VET sector stakeholders attended the launch. While NARA's launch was an important celebration of our achievements to date, we are still awaiting delegations from New South Wales, Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland (CRICOS) and Victoria (see right).

Meanwhile, back at the office, NARA staff have been meeting with representatives from the ACT and Tasmania to operationalise NARA's delegations from those jurisdictions.

A reminder that information for multi-jurisdictional RTOs interested in transferring to NARA is available on NARA's website:  
[www.nara.tvetaustralia.com.au](http://www.nara.tvetaustralia.com.au)

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## Deputy Prime Minister says NARA to lead regulation best practice



Deputy Prime Minister the Hon Julia Gillard MP (centre) and NARA staff (L-R) Catherine Kearney, Simon Hitchcock, Claire Field and Rachel Lofsten

Speaking at NARA's 10 September launch, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, the Hon Julia Gillard MP said that NARA's operations will support business growth by 'leading regulation best practice in the vocational education and training sector'.

"The Rudd Government is committed to the reform of vocational education and training to ensure that individuals and industry are placed at the centre of the system. The development of a single national body to audit and register training providers is an important milestone on this reform path," Minister Gillard said.

Minister Gillard also said the establishment of NARA signals a very firm commitment from governments across Australia to reducing red tape for business. "It will reduce bureaucracy for providers, help ensure greater national consistency and standards, and make the training system more flexible and transparent for providers, industry and students."

Minister Gillard was joined at the NARA launch by Victorian Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation, the Hon Jacinta Allan MP. Minister Allan spoke about the Victorian Government's commitment to working cooperatively with the Commonwealth on a range of VET reforms, including Victoria's delegation to NARA.

Minister Allan made an important announcement at the launch regarding the impending Victorian delegation. Minister Allan said while legislative change is necessary prior to any delegation from Victoria, she expected that this change would be made in the Spring session of Parliament and that she looked forward to working with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) to ensure the delegation was enacted as soon as practicable.

Minister Allan said she was pleased to be working cooperatively with the Commonwealth Government on national reform of the VET system, and that NARA represented another



NARA Senior Client Relationship Manager Julie Northridge and Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard

step forward for training in Australia. Minister Allan said that NARA 'will be an increasingly important player as we move to develop a skills system focused squarely on the users of the VET system and capable of meeting the big challenges facing Australia.'

### Focus on national consistency: regulatory reform

Regulatory reform of the VET sector was the focus of a panel shared by NARA's General Manager Claire Field at the recent ACPET conference in Hobart. Claire joined Dr Dianne Orr, Executive Director of Training Quality and Regulation, DETA Queensland, and Dr Reg Allen, CEO of the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority on the panel, which opened debate about areas for future regulatory reform within the VET sector.

Claire Field canvassed a number of areas where reform is needed, including national consistency of AQTF regulation and CRICOS regulation, offshore delivery, online learning, regulation of dual-sector providers and deregulation. Claire cautioned that if, as predicted by Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard, Australia's next economic boom is built on knowledge and skills in place of resources, VET regulators need to be

ready for this boom, which has already begun in the CRICOS arena. Claire suggested that, in preparation for this boom, 'regulators must find a way to ride alongside providers – ensuring they stay on the track towards quality outcomes without impeding their progress.' Claire further argued that regulators must know as much about the global VET market and its challenges as the most innovative providers to ensure successful outcomes for both consumers and RTOs.

Dianne Orr noted the substantial progress made in improving regulation within the VET sector with the introduction of the AQTF 2007 and she identified a number of areas for further reform, including greater access by VET consumers to meaningful performance information on RTOs, and greater consistency in the auditing of government contracted funding (eg User Choice funds).

Reg Allen discussed the nature of and need for regulation as a protection for learners and the reputation of Australia. He described how a single State regulator like the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority working across all sectors of education and training is able to adapt reforms in one sector to improved practice in others.

### 'Bacon and eggs' with NARA and Peter Noonan

During September, NARA has held business breakfasts in Hobart, Sydney and Melbourne (as part of NARA's launch) attended by a total of more than 350 people. The breakfast events focused on emerging issues in VET regulation, with NARA's General Manager Claire Field outlining the preliminary findings of the KPMG formative evaluation of the implementation of AQTF 2007 and NARA's response to these findings.



Peter Noonan speaking at NARA's Melbourne breakfast

### Peter Noonan: The Known Knowns & the Known Unknowns

In addition to bacon and eggs, RTOs at the Sydney and Melbourne breakfasts were treated to a glimpse of the future for VET, by education and training consultant Peter Noonan. Peter is the Director of education and training research and consulting firm, Peter Noonan Consulting. Peter has had extensive experience in senior levels of government at state and national levels, where he has helped shape policy directions in VET, Higher and Post Compulsory Education.

Peter spoke to RTOs and other key VET stakeholders about changes in the national VET policy context, including a return to cooperative federalism in national VET governance through the COAG productivity agenda, the further development of the training market, ▶



including greater contestability for public funding and a stronger focus on workforce development, and the development of broad workforce capabilities for ongoing learning and workforce participation. Peter said that, while there was a broad understanding of emerging national policy directions, the policy details constituted the 'known unknowns', namely:

- the nature of mechanisms for allocation of productivity places within jurisdictions in terms of Commonwealth\State agreement and state funded places.
- the conditions for entry to market, price and eligibility for capital funding.
- the extent to which a national VET market for public funding is created.
- the extent of shift to national regulation and audit.
- the extent of changes to National Training Packages and AQF, and;
- the level of differentiation between the States.

Peter also outlined the challenge for RTOs in facing the 'unknowns', suggesting RTOs develop a range of strategies for meeting these challenges, including:

- identifying and understanding different market segments and strengths and weaknesses of current provision.
- accessing and using market intelligence.
- enhancing the quality of their internal capacity, specifically their understanding of workforce capacity, products, quality assurance and compliance and information management systems.
- building relationships with schools and Higher Education, and;
- understanding the importance of RTO brokerage and advisory services.

Peter Noonan's presentation is available on NARA's website under recent presentations at [www.nara.tvetaustralia.com.au/nara\\_news](http://www.nara.tvetaustralia.com.au/nara_news).

## Working with NARA

The application package for NARA's next round of auditor procurement is now available on our website at [www.nara.tvetaustralia.com.au/working\\_with\\_nara](http://www.nara.tvetaustralia.com.au/working_with_nara). The closing date for the first procurement round is Monday 13 October 2008. If you have any questions about the application package or recruitment process, please email NARA Senior Client Relationship Manager Julie Northridge at [julie.northridge@tvetaustralia.com.au](mailto:julie.northridge@tvetaustralia.com.au)

## Out & about with NARA at TDA conference

In addition to our launch and business breakfasts, and NARA's participation in the ACPET national conference, NARA Senior Client Relationship Manager Julie Northridge attended the recent TAFE Directors' Australia national conference in the ACT on 16-17 September. The conference theme was TAFE Meets Parliament: Skills Innovation 2020 and key issues included contestability, productivity and governance. Julie's ACT visit also included a meeting with key Accreditation and Registration Council (ARC) staff about their recent delegation to NARA.

## Heads up on NARA's next Good Practice Workshops

In keeping with our charter, NARA is planning the next series of RTO Good Practice Workshops. The workshops will focus on Continuous Improvement and will be open to NARA and non-NARA RTOs. The workshops will be held in late 2008 - early 2009 and we will advise NARA News subscribers of dates and locations as soon as they are available.

## Reminder: ACPET WA breakfast, 23 October

A reminder that ACPET Western Australia is hosting a Business Breakfast for members on Thursday 23 October in Perth. The breakfast is an opportunity for ACPET RTOs to learn more about NARA prior to delegation being received from the WA Training Accreditation Council. NARA's Senior Client Relationship Managers Julie Northridge and Simon Hitchcock will speak about NARA's role and audit model. RSVP to NARA or Cathy Sutherland, ACPET WA's Executive Officer at [cathy.sutherland@acpet.edu.au](mailto:cathy.sutherland@acpet.edu.au) or on 08 6263 4437.



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