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Context

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is an independent not-for-profit company. It was established in 1981 and is owned by the Commonwealth, state and territory ministers responsible for vocational education and training (VET). These ministerial shareholders are herein referred to as 'Members'.

NCVER was set up as a national professional body responsible for collecting, managing, analysing and communicating VET research and statistics in an independent manner.

Our Memorandum and Articles of Association <https://www.ncver.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1186130/Memorandum_and_Articles_of_Association.pdf> requires us to 'carry out programs... that satisfy the needs of Members in discharging their responsibilities for VET'. Our priorities are to provide services to Members to underpin evidence-based public policy development and decision making. Our work is adjusted to meet their evolving requirements in supporting VET sector policy and practice.

Our Memorandum of Association also outlines our obligation to undertake activities that benefit the other diverse participants in the VET sector. This wide range of stakeholders includes public and private training providers, industry and union advocates, employers and regulators. Most importantly, it also includes the students who choose to undertake VET as part of their tertiary education. With the support of Members, we provide these stakeholders with data and research services.

NCVER's services are designed to support the effective functioning of the VET sector. Data and research outputs must be credible, factual and objective. This supports transparency in government operations, informs providers and students, and assists national VET regulation.

Future direction

In the age of 'big data' and the 'internet of everything', the priorities of Members are changing. So too are the expectations of stakeholders. They want closer to 'real-time' data and integrated analysis of training activity. They require pertinent information to better inform policy development and the management of jurisdictional and national VET systems. Our products need to be delivered on accessible modern digital platforms in easy-to-understand formats.

We have demonstrated progress towards meeting these requirements, underpinned by recent significant investment in VET data management infrastructure. However, far more needs to be achieved in the next three years. We must aspire to be a leader in advanced data systems and infrastructure, big data analytics, data linkage and surveys, all deeply integrated with research.

Just optimising what is in place now will not achieve the next level of required excellence. In order to remain relevant in a fast-changing technological world, we need to develop fully integrated and intelligent digital services and products that help people make use of our data in meaningful ways.

Developing future services desired by Members is dependent upon our closer engagement with Members and their officials. Changes must be agreed, not just in setting priorities but also on how to improve information flows, standards, quality, timeliness, disclosure and the publication of statistical data, and research and analyses. This will require shared infrastructure and improved systems, knowledge and skills exchange. Such changes will widely benefit both Members and stakeholders.

Structure of this plan

1	NCVER's vision and mission Linked with values that underpin our culture.
2	Seven strategic objectives Each further described by multiple interrelated actions.
3	Our commitment to quality and integrity To be a reliable source of highest quality VET information.
4	Our measures of success Aligned to each strategic objective.
5	Our principles of practice and operation To explain the many stakeholders we support and for what purpose.

Vision and mission

Vision	Mission
To maximise the power of data analytics integrated with research to transform national understanding of VET.	To deliver products and services that engage, inform and influence all participants in Australia's VET sector.
NCVER's outputs will be:	NCVER's work will be:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">essential to understanding VET sector dynamics and performancevalued by users as critical to their decision makingaligned to evolving VET sector priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">exceptional in integrating, analysing and explaining VET statistics and researchinsightful in synthesis of applied VET knowledgeresponsive to the changing needs of its Memberstrusted by all stakeholders as being professional, undertaken independently and conducted with the utmost integrity.

Values and culture

The following ten values underpin NCVER's culture.

We will strive to demonstrate these actions in our day-to-day behaviours:	
Responsiveness	We work collaboratively with our Members to set priorities.
Engagement	We engage proactively, constructively and responsively in all our work relationships.
Quality	We honour quality, respect standards and client service as motivated professionals.
Innovation	We explore new technologies, products and services to better meet clients' needs.
Integrity	Our advice is trusted, and we are fair-minded and accountable in our decisions.
Respect	We show and expect respect from each other, our clients and our stakeholders.
Learning	We share our knowledge, problem solve in teams, and listen to all viewpoints.
Diversity	We are inclusive of differences and value our varied cultures, knowledge and skills.
Change	We tackle problems, pursue agile solutions and embrace change of proven merit.
Reputation	We cherish our reputation and undertake our work with integrity and impartiality.

Strategic objectives

NCVER will pursue and implement the following strategic objectives and key actions during 2017–20.

Productive valued engagement

1. Engage widely and collaboratively to anticipate, understand and address national and state and territory VET information needs and priorities

NCVER will:

- work closely with our Members to identify and respond to their priorities
- maintain effective two-way engagement in framing and undertaking research and analyses to effectively address contemporary policy issues relevant to Members
- ensure our wider stakeholder engagement is timely and well-calibrated by exchange and promotion of information and knowledge that has broad relevance and impact
- deepen relationships, especially with industry and training providers, using multi-level strategies that are tailored and meaningful to these diverse groups
- strengthen our internal coordination in managing external relationships, with designated contacts and effective sharing of intelligence.

Excellence in integrated information

2. Produce integrated statistics, research and analytics that provide comprehensive insights to inform and influence the VET sector

NCVER will:

- integrate our statistics, research and analytical expertise to collaborate on projects and services to produce work of strategic value to the sector
- source and analyse information from within and beyond the company to generate insightful syntheses combining quantitative and qualitative research tackling contemporary issues
- seek opportunities to undertake informative data linkage analyses using reputable data to generate new insights to education and labour market pathways
- ensure the outputs of this integrated work are presented and explained in a manner that both informs and can be applied to VET policy, performance and practice.

Quality, integrity and confidence

3. Assure the quality, integrity and transparency of our VET-related products and services, instilling confidence in their use

NCVER will:

- be a trusted data custodian by adhering to sound and transparent principles of practice
- ensure information is readily accessible, easy to understand and presents findings upon which users can rely to make decisions
- ensure that privacy is given to those who provide data, and that information accessed or released is in strict accordance with legislative and policy requirements
- improve the quality, accuracy, integrity and efficiency of VET data collection by enhancing and streamlining systems for VET data submitters.

Innovative products and services

4. Develop and implement ambitious, intelligent, customised and accessible VET-related products and services that are used and valued by our diverse stakeholders

NCVER will:

- create high-quality, adaptive yet consistent and intuitive-to-use products, supported by responsive services, to improve user insight, access, quality and delivery
- explore and introduce more ambitious and timely data collection and products to support Members' management and funding of the VET system
- co-design products with VET stakeholders to help meet customised requirements in tracking their performance and explaining VET system supply and demand challenges
- build on our competitive capabilities through targeted strategic consultancy services.

Recognised knowledge leader

5. Use targeted communication channels to enhance our impact by promoting and explaining our work so that it can inform and influence the VET sector

NCVER will:

- increase brand awareness through proactive and effective marketing and communication strategies and channels
- promote wider understanding of current trends and issues in VET to inform decision-making by providing reliable access and clear navigation to our digital content
- build an informed community by using interactive formats to facilitate discussion about VET issues, customising products and services to deliver targeted user experiences
- add value to the VET sector by highlighting international evidence for benchmarking purposes and fostering best practice.

Skilled committed people

6. Further develop our people as a highly skilled, adaptive and professional workforce, who are committed to our values and learning culture

NCVER will:

- invest in staff to realise our future direction and implement this plan, supporting their professional development, knowledge, technical and interpersonal skills through formal training, coaching and strong leadership
- recognise and reward staff as our greatest asset and foster a work environment that makes best use of their diverse talent to drive innovation and continuous improvement
- support an equitable workplace that fosters company culture and values, especially our diversity, as an asset in team excellence, collaboration and professionalism
- engage staff in decision-making, and provide support to staff in adapting to and implementing change.

Operational excellence

7. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our systems and processes to underpin success and performance

NCVER will:

- proactively manage our technology, assets and resources to meet the demands of Members and stakeholders by investing in leading-edge business systems and processes
- maximise productivity by empowering staff to streamline systems and processes
- maintain and deliver high-quality client service standards across the organisation for Members and stakeholders
- improve financial acumen and governance disciplines to effectively manage business finances and risk, conscious of our environmental impacts and social responsibilities.

Quality and integrity

Being a trusted and reliable source of highest quality VET information means:

- analyses are of the highest standards, transparent, credible and replicable
- methods are statistically sound, research practices are ethical, work is open to scrutiny
- the quality, completeness and overall integrity of national VET data collections are upheld
- statistical, analytical and research results are published subject to quality standards, with defined embargo periods for the purposes of briefing Members on findings in advance
- the privacy of data held in the national VET collections and surveys is safeguarded through leading practices, encryption and archiving for future use

Measures of success

#	Objective	Measure of success
1	Engage widely and collaboratively to anticipate, understand and address national and state and territory VET information needs and priorities	Members and stakeholders are satisfied with our multi-level engagement across the VET sector, based on evidence derived from both structured and unstructured surveys.
2	Produce integrated statistics, research and analytics that provide comprehensive insights to inform and influence the VET sector	Members and stakeholders are satisfied with our provision of integrated statistics, research and analytics, evidenced by periodic surveys.
3	Assure the quality, integrity and transparency of our VET-related products and services, instilling confidence in their use	Members and stakeholders are satisfied with quality, transparency and availability of our products and services and data submitters with the level of support they receive. Number of quality issues identified needing action.
4	Develop and implement ambitious, intelligent, customised and accessible VET-related products and services that are used and valued by our diverse stakeholders	Members and stakeholders rate our products and services as highly relevant and informative, evidenced by periodic surveys. Increased usage of our data and research products.
5	Use targeted communication channels to enhance our impact by promoting and explaining our work so that it can inform and influence the VET sector	Members and stakeholders demonstrate an increased awareness, use and satisfaction of our Portal, its products and services evidenced by quarterly metrics.
6	Further develop our people as a highly skilled, adaptive and professional workforce, who are committed to our values and learning culture	Improving engagement, satisfaction, recognition and professional development ratings evidenced by annual staff surveys.
7	Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our systems and processes to underpin success and performance	Secure the necessary funding and resources and deliver all outcomes in accord with contracts, whilst adapting to NCVET's changing environment. A reduction in our environmental footprint.

Principles of practice and operations

Multiple factors uniquely shape NCVER's strategy and practices. Our operating context is complex. NCVER was founded by governments and our funding comes predominantly from Members. However, we have always served a wider range of VET stakeholders. Whilst Members work collaboratively with us to establish contracted priorities, our statistical publications and research analyses are 'independent' in the sense that their integrity cannot be compromised by political interventions.

A key role of NCVER's Board is to oversee these complex relationships and to ensure that all stakeholder interests are met. The company has considerable latitude in the manner in which it operates, although its outputs must be in accord with national policies and contract deliverables as expressed in funding agreements for the VET Statistical Services Program and VET Research Services Program.

The following are guiding principles of practice and operations, viewed from the different perspectives of Members and stakeholders across the national VET sector. These explain what guides our relationships and engagements, our work priorities, and our resource and business investments that drive IT systems, data collections, analytics and research outputs.

Our 'vision and mission' means:

- supporting the effective functioning of the VET system through the provision of information and analysis to governments, industry, providers and the wider community
- providing targeted and timely analyses on issues that relate directly to the VET policy settings of one or more jurisdictions
- ensuring that the statistical standards keep pace with the changing needs of the sector
- maintaining accessible data collections and surveys for use by all VET system participants and stakeholders
- producing periodic and thematic reports that distil key trends and highlight emerging issues in the VET sector
- advising on ways to improve the national collections and fully leverage that available data to produce insights and thought leadership.

Our 'independence' means:

- ensuring the integrity of our statistical and research analyses, by publishing findings that are factual and objective
- as appropriate, presenting independent, balanced and well-reasoned critiques of the operation of the VET sector
- when planning priorities and contracting, being persuasive in responding to requirements, and independent in allocating resources, skilling our staff and conducting our business
- within bounds of relevant legislation and policy, making national collections, surveys, analyses, research and VET knowledge resources available and accessible for public use.

Providing support for Members means:

- recognising that the ministers of the Commonwealth and state and territory governments are the company's shareholders
- agreeing on priorities, set out in funded contractual requirements
- providing as close to real-time information about the VET system to support Member's decisions on optimal public investment in VET to meet skills needs
- highlighting and framing future opportunities for governments to improve the national VET system based on sound evidenced-based research and data analytics
- advising of any improvements to the national collections
- providing comprehensive understanding of the key transitions and pathways of young people.
- working with Members and their officials in a collaborative partnership.

Providing support to a diverse range of stakeholders means recognising their differing needs:

For state and territory education and training authorities advising governments:

- informing and enriching their policy understanding and advice on all matters relevant to increasing workforce productivity and participation through VET
- securely storing their data and providing access to useful products and services

For registered training organisations and training providers:

- supporting providers to meet their regulatory data reporting obligations efficiently and in high quality through smart interconnecting information management systems
- providing market and VET system intelligence and contemporary research on education and training practices that they use and adopt to raise VET quality.

For VET regulators:

- providing timely intelligence to support their risk-based regulation so all registered providers operate with full adherence to highest quality standards
- coordinating the collection of data for the National VET Provider and VET in Schools Collections
- as needed, assisting VET regulators to provide students access to their training information when their RTO has closed.

For industry advisors, employer organisation and unions:

- providing ready access to insightful data and products that inform them about the national training system, absorbing their knowledge and expertise into our work.

For enterprises and employers of VET graduates:

- offering opportunity for employers to express their views on how the VET system meets their skills needs to help discern their requirements in VET training quality
- collating training activity from enterprise RTOs to better understand the enterprise training market.

For VET students and learners:

- undertaking surveys that encourage students and young people to express their views about learning and work experiences, and compiling information accessible to students
- supporting the implementation of the Unique Student Identifier (USI) by providing educational data for student transcripts.

For VET teachers, practitioners and providers:

- curating or undertaking research on best-practices in training and assessment by scanning and benchmarking national and international VET system excellence.

For research and educational institutions, including international VET-related agencies:

- providing ready access to all national VET administrative data and surveys, research and curated literature to support their research interests
- providing ready access to longitudinal data on youth transitions and pathways
- tracking trends in international VET policy and practices, benchmarking Australian VET practices where needed
- encouraging research on VET-related topics.

For all stakeholders:

- consulting widely on an on-going basis on their interests in information and developments in the VET sector.
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