

# The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on VET and its transition to digital delivery



# Presenters

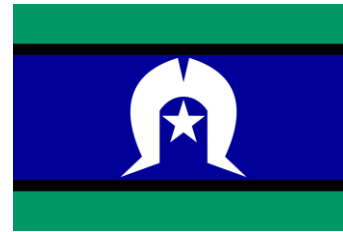


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Executive Manager, Inform and Engage  
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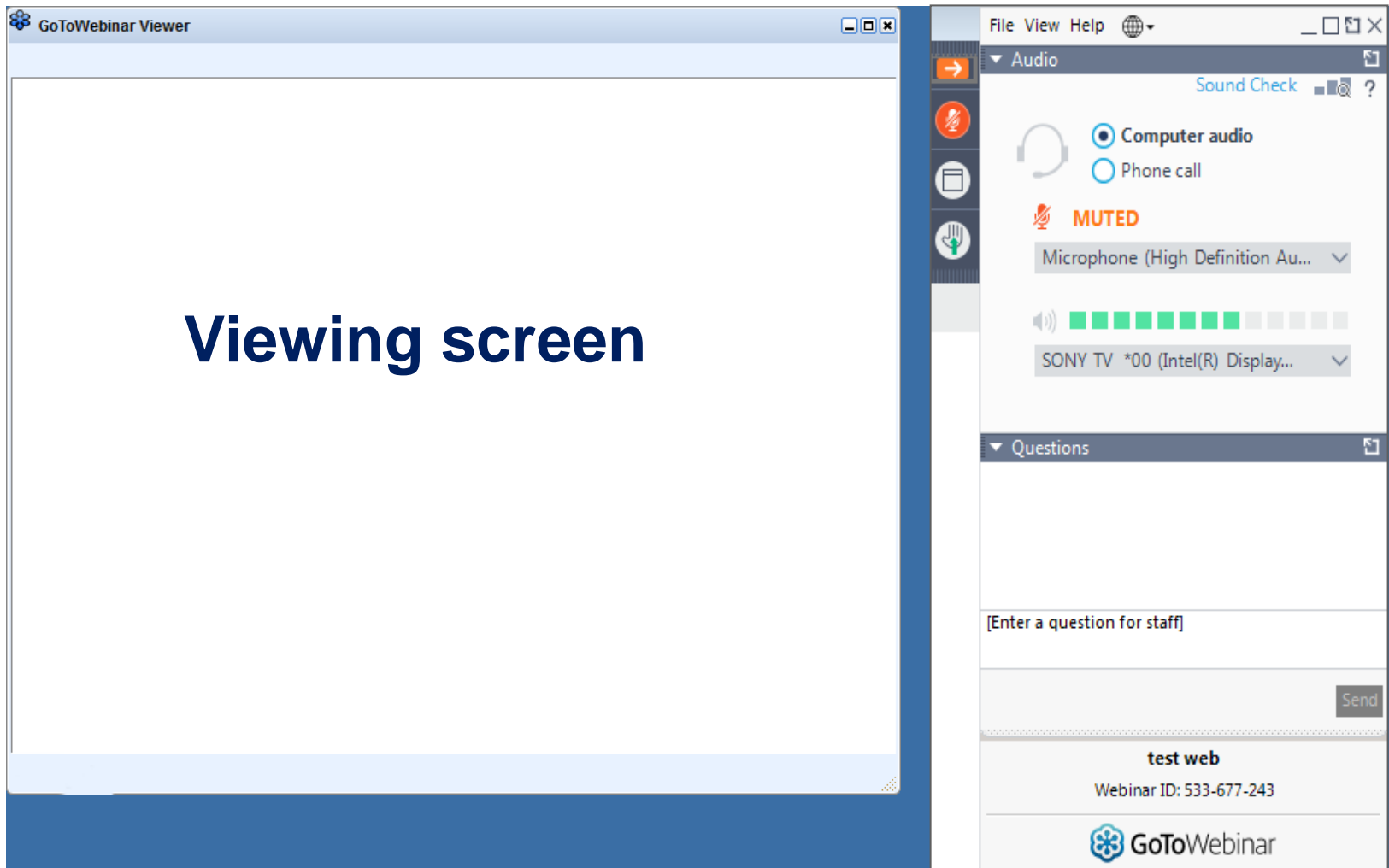
**Melinda Lees**  
Team Leader, Research & Data Analytics  
NCVER

## Acknowledgement of Country



I wish to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continued spiritual connection to land. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

# Housekeeping: What attendees see



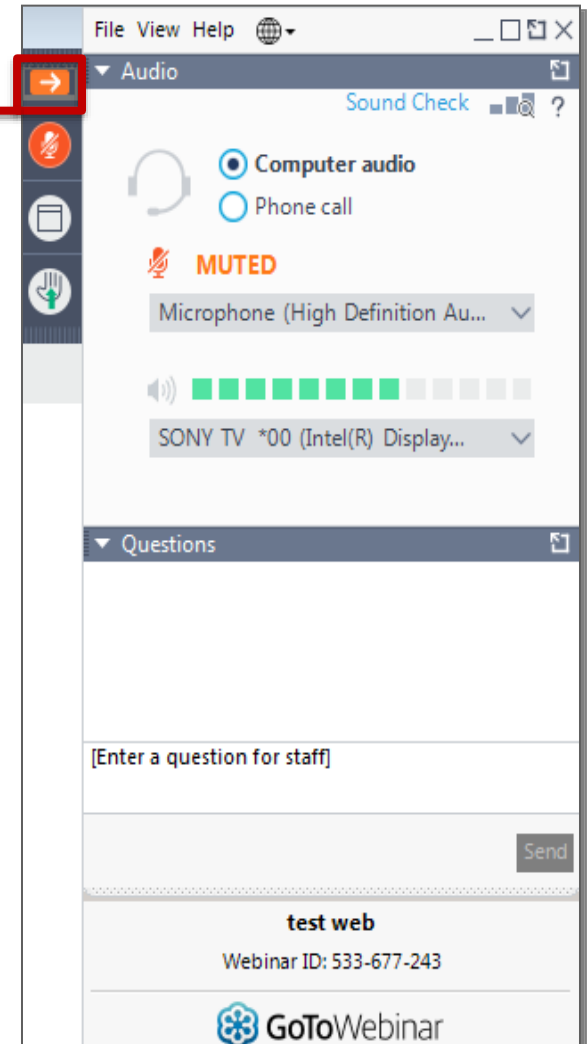
The screenshot displays the GoToWebinar Viewer interface. The main window, titled "GoToWebinar Viewer", shows a large white area with the text "Viewing screen" in the center. To the right is a control panel with a "File View Help" menu and a "Sound Check" button. The "Audio" section is expanded, showing "Computer audio" selected and "Phone call" unselected. A "MUTED" indicator is present, along with a dropdown menu for "Microphone (High Definition Au...". Below this is a volume slider and a dropdown for "SONY TV \*00 (Intel(R) Display...". The "Questions" section is also expanded, showing a text input field with the placeholder "[Enter a question for staff]" and a "Send" button. At the bottom of the control panel, it displays "test web", "Webinar ID: 533-677-243", and the GoToWebinar logo.

# Housekeeping: Attendee participation

## Open and hide your control panel

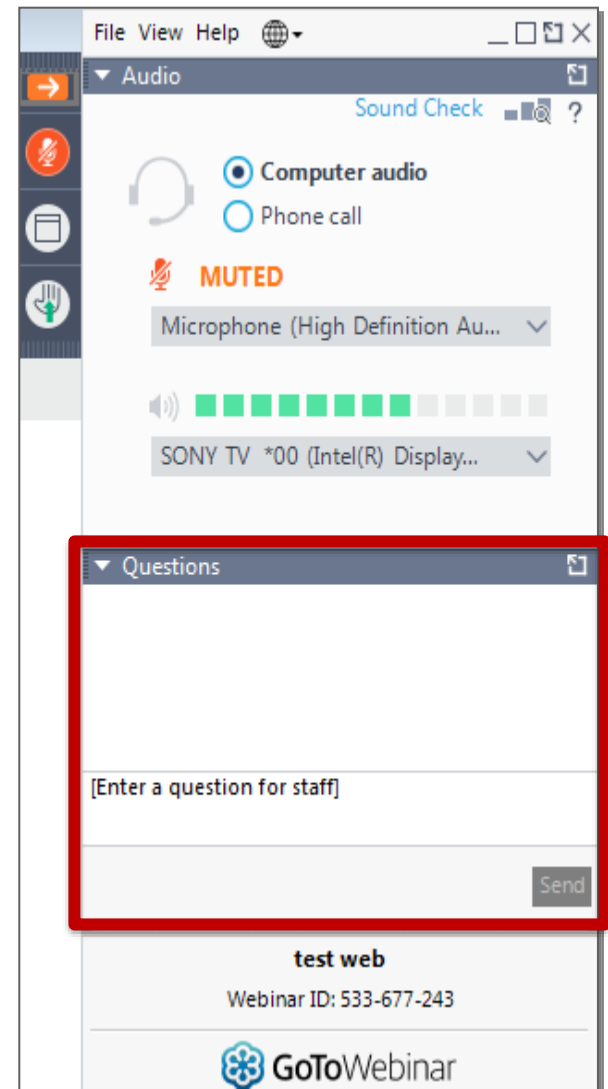
### Join audio:

- Choose “Computer audio” to use VoIP (audio over the Internet), **OR**
- Choose “Phone call” and dial in using the information provided



The screenshot shows the audio control panel in a GoToWebinar window. The window title is "File View Help" and the panel is titled "Audio". It includes a "Sound Check" button and a "MUTED" indicator. The "Computer audio" option is selected, and the microphone is set to "Microphone (High Definition Au...". A volume slider is visible, and the speaker output is set to "SONY TV \*00 (Intel(R) Display...". Below the audio controls is a "Questions" section with a text input field containing "[Enter a question for staff]" and a "Send" button. At the bottom, the text "test web" and "Webinar ID: 533-677-243" is displayed, along with the GoToWebinar logo.

# Housekeeping: Questions



The screenshot shows a GoToWebinar interface with two panels. The top panel is the 'Audio' panel, which includes a 'Sound Check' button, radio buttons for 'Computer audio' (selected) and 'Phone call', a 'MUTED' indicator with a microphone icon, a dropdown menu for 'Microphone (High Definition Au...', a volume slider, and a dropdown menu for 'SONY TV \*00 (Intel(R) Display...'. The bottom panel is the 'Questions' panel, which is highlighted with a red border. It contains a text input field with the placeholder text '[Enter a question for staff]' and a 'Send' button. Below the panels, the text 'test web' and 'Webinar ID: 533-677-243' is visible, along with the GoToWebinar logo.

You can submit your questions and comments using the Questions Panel at any time.

# The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on VET and its transition to digital delivery



# Outline

- NCVER Reports & Surveys from which data are drawn
- Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on:
  - Training provider delivery
  - Employer training choices
  - Student participation and outcomes
- Lessons and conclusions



## Related NCVER Reports & Surveys

- *Upskilling and reskilling: the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employers and their training choices* (White & Rittie, 2022)
- *Treading water: effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth transitions* (Forrest, 2022)
- *What VET can offer to COVID-19 youth unemployment recovery.* (Waugh & Circelli, 2021)
- *The online delivery of VET during COVID-19 (Parts 1 & 2)* (Hume & Griffin, 2021 2022)
- *Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on VET* (Lees, Trimboli and Zhang 2023)
- Survey of employers' use & views of the VET system (SEUV)
- Various VET student & apprentice/trainee data accessible on NCVER Portal

## COVID – initial impacts

- The COVID-19 pandemic had a big effect on Australia's VET sector. It caused problems with mandatory work placements, fewer students enrolled and engaged, and affected staff wellbeing and retention. Disadvantaged students and those living in high-infection regions were the groups most affected.
- Training providers responded to the individual needs of students during the pandemic by introducing a combination of online and in-person teaching, flexible work options for staff, better hygiene protocols, and mental health and wellbeing programs. This led to significant changes in their business processes, including the shift to blended learning, which will be long-lasting.
- The pandemic has also had an impact on the income and financial viability of training providers. While there was some improvement in late 2020 and early 2021, many providers reported the situation was still challenging into 2022. This highlights the sector's continual need for adaptation and resilience.

## COVID – initial impacts

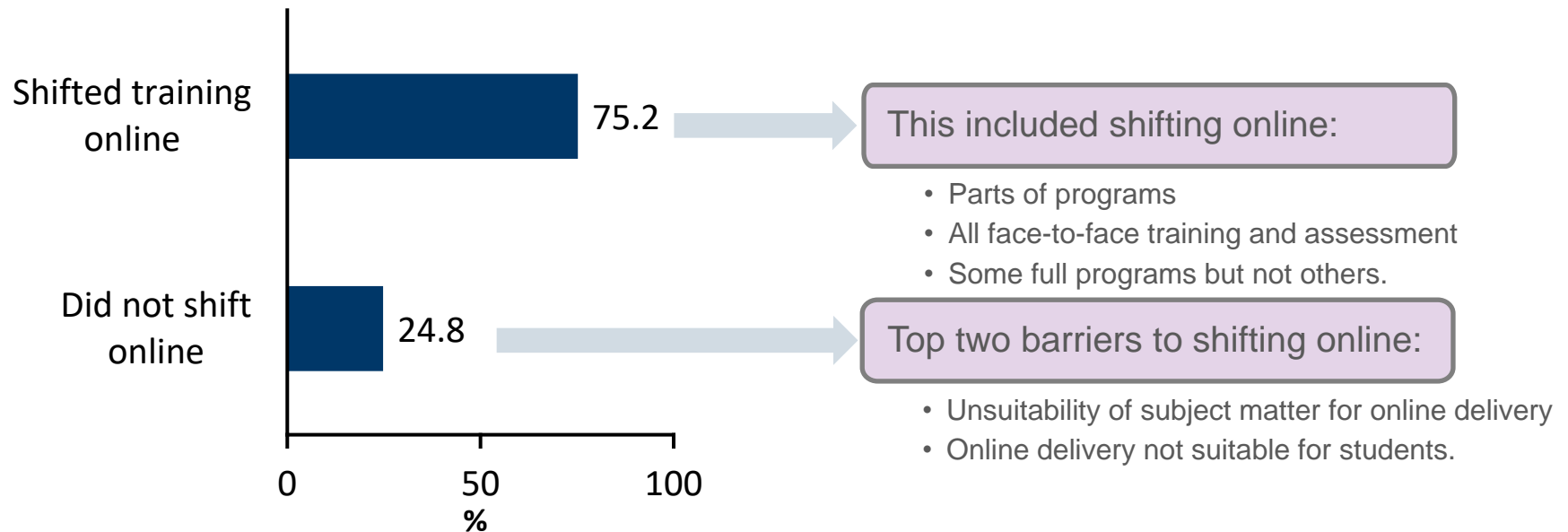
Other impacts included:

- Many apprentice and trainee contracts were suspended and some were 'let go' due to difficult economic trading conditions
- But the sector has enormous resilience and the post COVID-19 recovery is occurring, with new training requirements and opportunities identified!

## Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on training provider delivery



## Online delivery during the pandemic



## RTOs that did not deliver online before the pandemic



64% of RTOs that were **not** online pre-pandemic shifted online

70% **introduced** meeting platforms such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams

29% **introduced** a Learning Management System

## Future RTO intentions

### Latest statistics show

Subject enrolments delivered through blended delivery:

23% in 2019 → 29% in 2021<sup>1</sup>.

Pandemic has shaped future training delivery plans

62% likely to use more blended learning<sup>2</sup>

22% likely to permanently shift more units/parts of qualifications online<sup>3</sup>

- 1 Hume & Griffin 2022 Delivery of VET: emerging trends in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- 2 Hume & Griffin 2021 The online delivery of VET during COVID-19: part 1
- 3 Hume & Griffin 2022 The online delivery of VET during the COVID-19 pandemic: part 2

# Trainer readiness

84% of RTOs reported that trainers adapted well to the shift online

## But were challenged by...

Designing and developing materials for  
online delivery

Their limited experience with delivering  
training online

## A more considered approach...

- teaching practices for online delivery
- student support for online students
- support for trainers



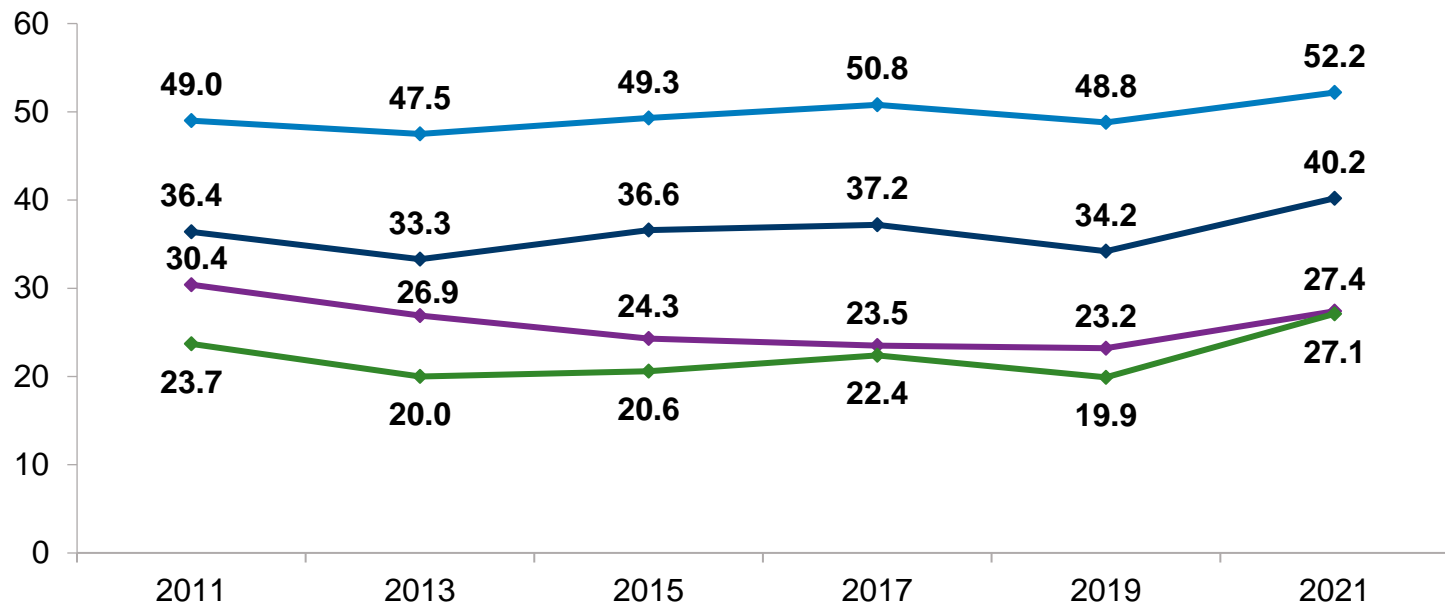
## Trainer readiness continued

- Although more than 84% of surveyed RTOs reported that trainers and assessors had adapted well to the shift online, they acknowledged that trainers and assessors were challenged by:
  - time pressure/urgency to shift online (62.8%)
  - time commitment required for developing online resources (60%)
  - students who lacked the digital skills necessary for online learning (58.6%)
- When considering the range of challenges that students may have faced with the shift online, the unsuitability of online delivery for some students was perceived by RTOs to be the greatest challenge (71.7%), followed by:
  - isolation/lack of peer interaction (63.4%)
  - maintaining engagement in an online environment (62%).

# Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on employer training choices



# Employers' training choices 2011–21 (%)



- ◆ Employers with jobs that require vocational qualifications
- ◆ Employers with apprentices and trainees
- ◆ Employers using nationally recognised training
- ◆ Employers using unaccredited training

## Industry training requirements

Industries most impacted by COVID-19 restrictions had the highest proportions of employers with new COVID-19 related training requirements

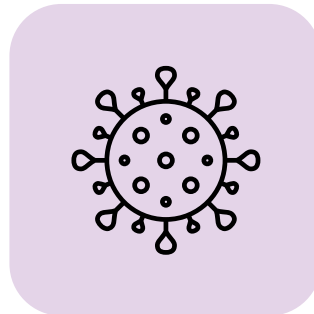
Lesser impacted industries had lower proportions of employers with new COVID-19 related training requirements

## Reasons organisations had new training requirements due to the impacts of COVID-19

### Top reasons:

- Effectively/safely operate in the COVID-19 environment (84%)
- Train staff to undertake new tasks and/or responsibilities (33%)
- Needed to access training to help manage business operations in COVID-19 environment (31%).

## Key areas covered by new training requirements



## Employer's future training needs

Australia's post-pandemic economic recovery and the transition to new ways of working bring opportunities for the VET system to address challenges employers are facing:

- the need for organisations to fulfil COVID-19 operating requirements (for example healthcare settings)
- technological change and the accelerating digitalisation of the workplace (for example, the transition to online service delivery and remote working arrangements)
- utilising blended methods of training delivery (for example, striking the right balance of online and practical).

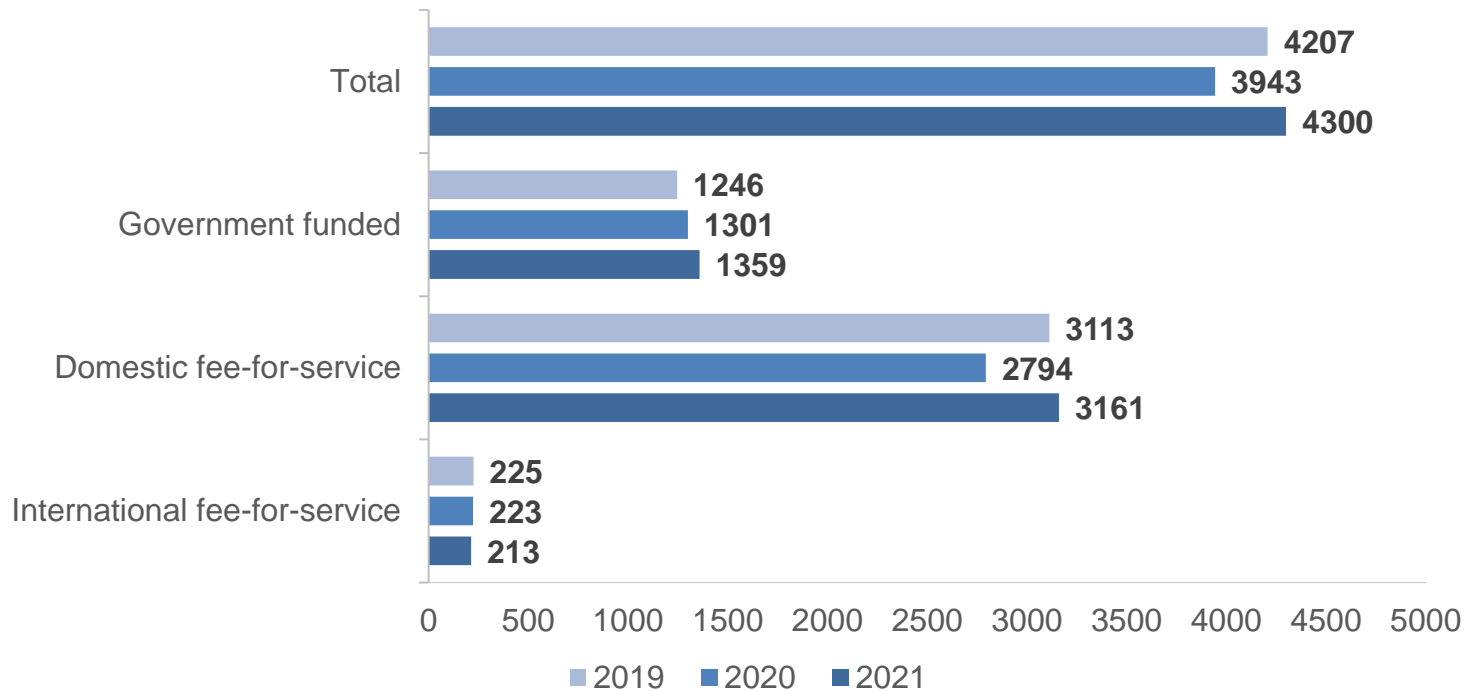
## Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on student participation and outcomes





# Total VET student enrolments

Total VET students by funding source 2019-21 ('000)

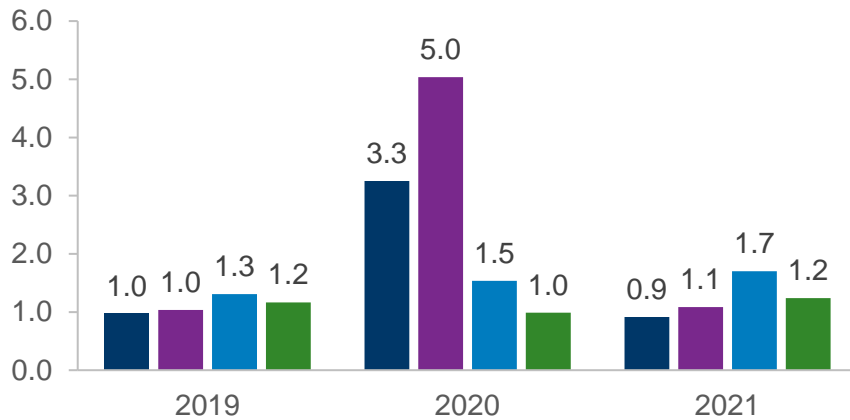


## Program enrolments by equity group

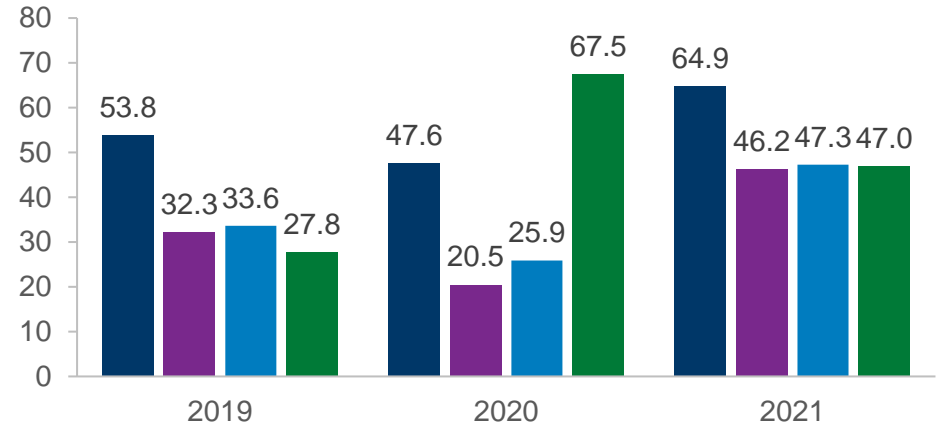
Equity groups	% change		
	2019–20	2020–21	2019–21
Indigenous	<b>-8.9</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>-4.1</b>
With a disability	<b>-4.8</b>	<b>5.1</b>	0.1
Speak a language other than English spoken at home (LOTE)	-1.6	<b>2.0</b>	0.4
Regional/remote student location	<b>-5.1</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>-1.4</b>
SEIFA quintile 1 (most disadvantaged)	<b>-6.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>-3.2</b>
<b>Total program enrolments</b>	<b>-3.0</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>2.0</b>

# Apprentice & trainee contract suspensions and commencements

### Contract suspensions ('000)



### Contract commencements ('000)

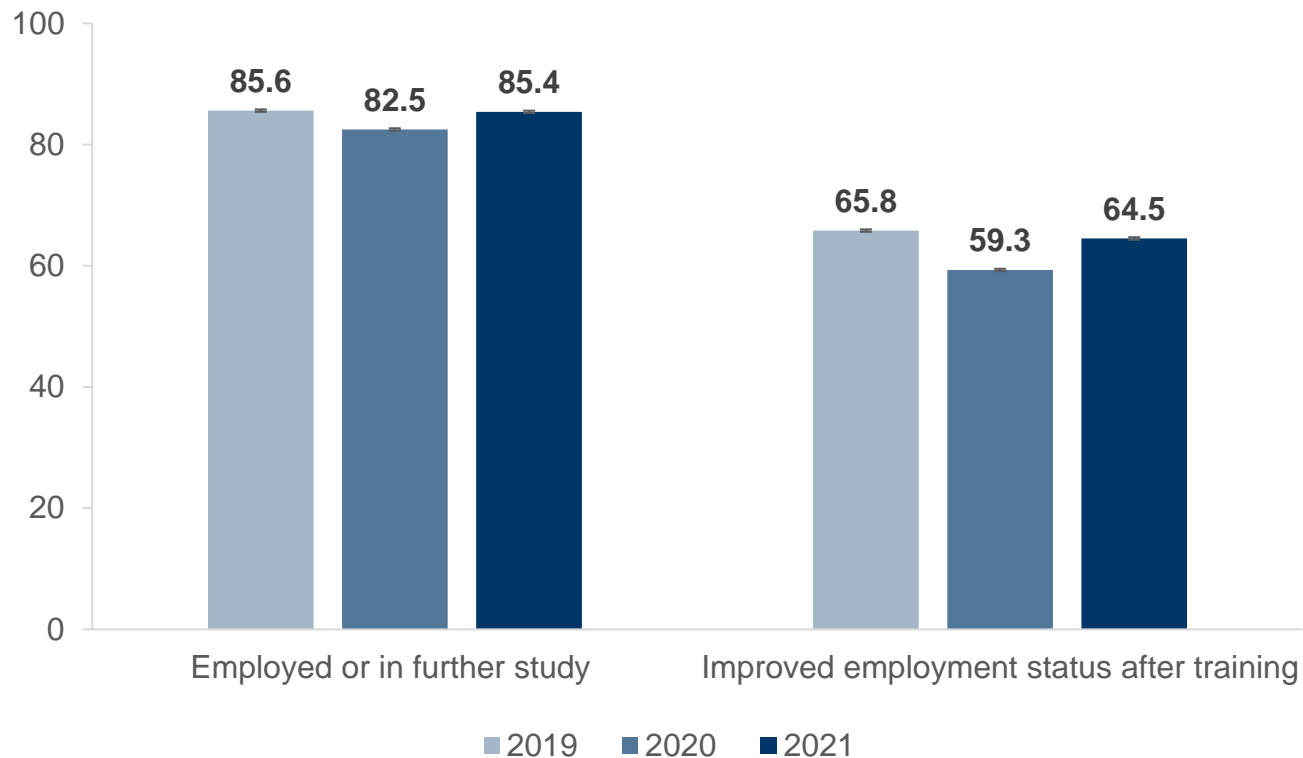


■ Jan-Mar   ■ Apr-Jun   ■ Jul-Sep   ■ Oct-Dec

## Subject completions and non-completions

	Proportion of all enrolments (%)		
	2019	2020	2021
Competency achieved/pass	69.0	<b>64.0</b>	66.3
Competency not achieved/fail	2.9	3.2	3.1
Continuing activity	18.0	<b>21.4</b>	19.3
RPL granted	3.3	3.7	3.4
RPL not granted	0	0	0
Withdrawn/Discontinued	6.7	<b>7.7</b>	7.9
Incomplete due to RTO closure	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

## Employment outcomes of domestic qualification completers



## Satisfaction outcomes of domestic qualification completers

Satisfaction outcomes	Percentage-point difference		
	2019–20	2020–21	2019–21
Achieved main reason for training	0.0	1.6	<b>1.6</b>
Satisfied with the training overall	-0.2	0.9	<b>0.7</b>
Developed problem-solving skills	0.7	0.0	<b>0.7</b>
Satisfaction with assessment	-0.3	0.4	0.1
Improved numerical skills	-0.2	1.9	<b>1.7</b>
Satisfaction with teaching	-0.2	0.6	<b>0.4</b>
Improved writing skills	-0.3	1.3	<b>1.0</b>

## In conclusion

COVID-19 had many consequences for VET in Australia, including:

- Created a temporary dip in enrolments, completions and apprentice and trainee in-training numbers which has since recovered
- Moving to fully online delivered courses in rapid time created complexity; but has probably accelerated the more permanent trend toward hybrid and online delivery modes
- Important to understand that fully online delivery doesn't suit all learners and courses – and requires additional support services
- Created new opportunities for training; especially around infection control.
- Highlighted the importance of wrap around services in supporting both staff and students

## Questions?

**NCVER website:**

<https://www.ncver.edu.au>

**Current Research Projects:**

<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/current-research>

**For more information contact:**

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Thank you



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