

ACDEVEG

Australian Council of Deans of Education
Vocational Education Group

ACDE

Australian Council of Deans of Education

11th Annual ACDEVEG Conference

**VET teaching in the tertiary education sector:
New horizons and possibilities for policy and practice**



University of Canberra

Ann Harding Conference Centre

24 University Drive South, Bruce, ACT

Thursday 11th December 2025			
1.30pm-2.00pm	Conference Registration		
2.00pm-2.10pm	Welcome to the Conference and University of Canberra Professor Barney Dalgarno, Executive Dean Faculty of Education, University of Canberra		
2.10pm-2.25pm	Welcome to the Conference and ACDEVEG update Dr Daryl South, Chair ACDEVEG		
2.30pm-3.10pm	Keynote: A strong footing: data-driven insights for a National Skills System - implications for VET teachers Bjorn Jarvis, Jobs and Skills Australia.		
3.10pm-3.30pm	Afternoon tea		
	Conference Room	Seminar Room 1	Seminar Room 2
3.30pm-4.15pm	Workshop: Consultation on JSA's discussion paper 'Building a better understanding of the VET workforce': occupational mapping and data strategy Lizzie Knight and Simon Madden, JSA	Workshop: Bangadyi bulbuwul wingaragu muru: building strong learning pathways Anissa Jones, UNSW	Workshop: Harnessing industry collaboration and feedback to drive teaching innovation and curriculum design Suzanne Bevacqua and Mandeep Chahil, RMIT
4.20pm-5.05pm	Workshop: Consultation on JSA's discussion paper 'Building a better understanding of the VET workforce': research program and casualisation research project Lizzie Knight and Simon Madden, JSA	Workshop: Supporting CALD Learners in VET: Bilingual delivery or English-only delivery? Songlin Li, AMES Australia	Workshop: Mapping the VET system for quality and outcomes Megan Turner, UTS
5.10pm-5.30pm	Presentation: From gap to grid: strategic findings of the VET Blueprint Project to power Australia's energy workforce Dr Farzan Tahir, Powering Skills Jobs & Skills Council		

Friday 12th December 2025

8.30am-9.00am	Conference Registration		
9.00am-9.05 am	Day Two Welcome Dr Daryl South, Chair ACDEVEG		
9.10am-10.00am	Panel: VET teaching in a tertiary education sector: how are we positioned to meet this agenda, what strengths do we bring and what do we need to strengthen? • Prof Andy Smith (Panel Chair) • Jenny Dodd, CEO, TAFE Directors Australia • Lizzie Knight, Jobs and Skills Australia • Peter Dawkins AO, former VC VU, co-author <i>Opportunity and productivity: towards a Tertiary Harmonisation Roadmap</i> • André Diez de Aux, Senior Director, Skills Policy and Strategy, Skills Canberra		
10.00am-10.15am	Video presentation: Building VET workforce capability Paige O'Riley, Assistant Director, Policy and Education, ASQA		
10.15am-10.45am	Keynote: Towards a joined-up Tertiary system Dr Claire Sainsbury, Assistant Secretary of the Equity and Tertiary Branch, Interim Australian Tertiary Commission		
10.45am-11.15am	Morning tea		
	Conference Room	Seminar Room 1	Seminar Room 2
11.15am-11.40am		Research paper: Exploring the experiences and impact of compliance obligations for new VET teachers Emily Barter, University of Melbourne	Research paper: Future-ready educators Michele Tocci, Chisholm TAFE
11.45am-12.10pm		Research paper: Co-creation of VET assessments: strengthening industry connections Rajesh Iyer, RMIT	Research paper: Co-designing the case-based pedagogy and assessment in vocational teacher training Dr Oksana Razoumova, Victoria University
12.15pm-12.40pm		Research paper: Paid to Learn Initiative Dr Tryon Francis, TAFE South Australia	Research paper: VET professional development: a managerial paradox Christopher Ward, Deakin University

12.45pm-1.15pm	Panel: ‘How VET teacher-educator groups support their members and improve practice’ • Prof Marg Malloch (Panel Chair) • Dr Daryl South, Charles Sturt University; Chair ACDEVEG • Amanda Wallace, Box Hill Institute, Chair VET Practitioner Network • Angela Ryan, Canberra Institute of Technology, incoming Chair National VET Educator Development Network		
1.15pm-1.50pm	<i>Lunch</i>		
	<i>Conference Room</i>	<i>Seminar Room 1</i>	<i>Seminar Room 2</i>
1.50pm-2.35pm		Workshop: The new Certificate IV in Training and Assessment: (How) do we know how it is being taught? Prof Erica Smith, Federation University	Workshop: Future-ready VET educators: building career adaptability through Savickas’ lens Melanie Evangelista, RMIT
2.40pm-3.25pm		Research paper: VET teachers’ use of learning theories to reframe teaching practice Anthony Pearce, Federation University Prof Erica Smith, Federation University	Workshop: PD with Impact: reimagining PD for VET teacher education Michele Tocci, Chisholm TAFE
3.30pm-4.10pm	Keynote: Teachers and trainers: the heart of the VET system Emeritus Professor Erica Smith, Federation University		
4.10pm-4.30pm	Conference close Dr Daryl South, Chair ACDEVEG <i>Afternoon tea served from close of conference</i>		

Keynote Speakers and Panel Members:

Professor Barney Dalgarno

Executive Dean Faculty of Education, University of Canberra

Barney is Executive Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Canberra. Professor Dalgarno's research interests include the educational and social impact of digital technologies, the learning affordances of virtual, mixed and augmented realities, and the future of universities and schools in an age of digital disruption. He has had international influence through 140 publications, award winning online learning innovations and editorship of educational technology journals, books and conference proceedings.



Bjorn Jarvis

Head of the Workforce Futures Program, Jobs and Skills Australia

Bjorn heads up Jobs and Skills Australia's Workforce Futures Program, driving the agency's focus on understanding, informing and supporting Australia's potential future workforces. JSA does this through delivering highly relevant additional data, insights and advice - including findings and recommendations from detailed studies. Bjorn's program delves into the parts of the jobs and skills system identified for their opportunities or challenges, often pioneering deep exploration of these system areas (such as the jobs and skills implications of Generative AI).

Dr Farzan Tahir

Powering Skills Jobs & Skills Council

Farzan is a Project Research Assistant at Powering Skills Organisation, working on the VET Blueprint Project and specialising in workforce strategy, educator capability, and industry engagement across the VET energy sector. With a background in electrical engineering and a PhD examining the social dimensions of microgrids in Australia's energy transition, Farzan brings a blend of technical insight and community-focused research expertise. He is a core contributor to the VET Blueprint, translating national evidence and stakeholder insights into practical, future-focused workforce solutions that support Australia's clean-energy skills pipeline.



Dr Elizabeth Knight

Director of VET Workforce, Jobs and Skills Australia and Honorary Senior Research Fellow, Victoria University

With a background in teaching in EFL, TAFE and higher education and qualified careers counsellor education and career services, Lizzie has held academic and policy roles across multiple universities and government departments. She was formerly secretary of AVETRA and convenor of the AARE Professional Higher Education special interest group.

Jenny Dodd

Chief Executive TAFE Directors Australia

Jenny leads TAFE's positioning in tertiary education. Prior to leading TDA, Jenny was CEO of TasTAFE, Chief Academic Officer and General Manager of Gold Coast TAFE, and Deputy CEO Education, Marketing and National Positioning for the Canberra Institute of Technology. Among her other representative roles, Jenny is currently a member of the Implementation Advisory Committee for the Universities Accord. Jenny has qualifications in commerce, human resource management, education, and training and assessment.



Peter Dawkins AO

Former Vice Chancellor Victoria University and co-author *Opportunity and productivity: towards a tertiary harmonisation roadmap*

Peter is an economist and educator whose career has spanned academia and government. He is Emeritus Professor of Economics, Mitchell Institute at Victoria University. In 2022-23 he led the establishment of Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) as Interim Director and Acting Commissioner and is now a Special Advisor to JSA. He is also a council member at the University of Tasmania and Chairs the West of Melbourne Economic Development Alliance (WoMEDA).



André Diez de Aux

Senior Director Skills Policy and Strategy, Skills Canberra

André has worked in a variety of roles across government, postsecondary education and quality assurance. He is currently a Senior Director at Skills Canberra with oversight of skills data and insights as well as skilled migration. Prior to that, he was Senior Education Leader at the Canberra Institute of Technology, where he was responsible for education reform and quality assurance. André has sat on numerous national committees and expert panels on subjects ranging from degree granting in vocational institutions to qualifications frameworks, as well as quality assurance in both the higher and vocational education sectors.



Paige O'Riley, Assistant Director Policy and Education, Australian Skills Quality Authority

Paige O'Riley is the Assistant Director, Policy and Education, at the Australian Skills Quality Authority. Paige has been at ASQA for almost seven years having previously worked at a registered training organisation. When she started at ASQA, she spent 4 years conducting regulatory audits before moving to the Policy team. For the past three years, she has been involved in planning, coordinating, communicating and implementing the 2025 Standards and more recently the amendments to the ESOS Act.



Dr Claire Sainsbury

Assistant Secretary Equity and Tertiary Branch, Interim Australian Tertiary Commission

Claire is a Torres Strait Islander (Maluilgal from the Western Islands) who grew up on Badu Island. Claire is a Senior Executive with the Commonwealth Department of Education and currently leads the Equity and Tertiary Branch in the interim Australian Tertiary Education Commission. Her Branch aims to create a more joined-up tertiary system that enables the inclusion and effective participation of priority cohorts across the tertiary system.



Amanda Wallace

Teaching Specialist & Educator Development, Box Hill Institute and Chair, Victorian VET Practitioners Network

Amanda is a committed teaching specialist and sector leader, dedicated to shaping high-quality practice across the VET workforce. As Chair of the Victorian VET Practitioner Network, she leads statewide collaboration, professional learning, and capability-building initiatives that uplift teachers at every stage of their career. She supports teachers to deliver engaging, industry-aligned learning and is a strong advocate for inclusive education, bringing a thoughtful blend of tradition and forward-thinking practice to her work to help strengthen VET teaching now and into the future.





Angela Ryan

Education Futures and Students, Canberra Institute of Technology and incoming Chair National VET Educator Development Network

Angela is an experienced education leader most recently leading CIT's educator capability initiatives, with a strong focus on supporting and developing new VET educators. She has a keen interest in workforce planning and VET sector reforms, bringing a strategic lens to the design and implementation of capability-building initiatives. She curates impactful professional learning programs that strengthen educators' digital confidence and advance contemporary pedagogical practice. She has also led the development of key educational frameworks and organisational strategies that guide quality practice across CIT.

Dr Daryl South

Course Director Adult & Vocational Education, Charles Sturt University and Chair Australian Council of Deans of Education Vocational Education Group (ACDEVEG)

Daryl's first qualification was in printing and he subsequently completed a number of vocational qualifications before moving to Higher Education. He is particularly interested in course design and delivery that recognises vocational experience and qualifications to facilitate entry into and completion of HE degrees. He developed a successful pathway into teaching for Student Learning Support Officers (SLSO) and this accelerated pathway currently has more than a thousand students studying to become classroom teachers.



**Emeritus Professor Erica Smith
Federation University**

In her thirty years as a VET researcher, Erica has managed many national and international research projects on VET, including many on VET teaching and teachers. She is co-chair of the international apprentice research network 'INAP', and a former president of AVETRA. Until her recent retirement she managed Federation University's substantial VET teacher-education program and its VET research group, RAVE. She was convenor of ACDEVEG for its first decade, and also of AVTEC, a predecessor group. She was recently a Ministerial appointment to the Advisory Board of the National Careers Institute and to the VET Workforce Blueprint Steering Committee. Erica has prior experience as a human resource manager in the retail and community sectors; and in several roles in the VET sector.

Workshops

Workshop: Bangadyi bulbuwul wingaragu muru: building strong learning pathways

Anissa Jones, UNSW

Led by Anissa Jones, a Burubirangal Dharug dhiyin (woman) and experienced VET educator, this workshop offers a culturally grounded approach to building inclusive learning environments. Creating culturally safe and responsive learning environments is essential for supporting Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students in VET. This workshop empowers educators to meet this need while aligning with Outcome 2.5.2 of the Standards for RTOs. While meeting this standard is a compliance requirement, its true purpose is to improve educational experiences and outcomes for students. Through this hands-on approach, participants will gain the confidence and capability to embed cultural safety into their everyday teaching. They will leave with actionable steps to foster culturally safe and respectful learning spaces. Drawing on firsthand experience developing and delivering culturally safe training programs, I will guide participants in deepening their understanding of cultural safety, enhancing their teaching skills, and confidently meeting the requirements of Outcome 2.5.2. This workshop provides a valuable opportunity for VET professionals to move from mere compliance to genuinely impactful practice.

Workshop: Harnessing industry collaboration and feedback to drive teaching innovation and curriculum design

Suzanne Bevacqua and Mandeep Chahil, RMIT

This practitioner workshop explores how sustained, strategic, and structured collaboration with industry drives pedagogical innovation and responsive curriculum design in vocational education and training (VET). Drawing on case-based insights from partnerships with professional services firms and regulatory bodies such as the ATO and ASIC, the session demonstrates how iterative feedback loops inform teaching practice, learning design, and assessment models in financial and legal services programs. Participants will actively engage with real-world case studies addressing ethical judgement, compliance, digital disruption, AI readiness, and employability skills. Activities are designed to model inclusive, learner-centred approaches consistent with Universal Design for Learning (UDL), enabling attendees to leave with practical strategies for strengthening industry alignment while maintaining pedagogical integrity.

Workshop: Supporting CALD Learners in VET: Bilingual delivery or English-only delivery?

Songlin Li, AMES Australia

This workshop will focus on a central challenge in delivering VET courses to CALD learners: how to motivate students to actively practise English when they believe it is not essential for employment. This workshop will open a structured discussion around three approaches to class composition and delivery:

- Homogenous CALD classes with bilingual trainers.
- Homogenous CALD classes with English-only delivery.
- Mixed-cultural group classes with English-only delivery.

Participants will engage in interactive activities (e.g., Kahoot) and collaborative dialogue to evaluate these models, share strategies, and provide feedback as “critical friends.” The aim is to generate practical solutions to strengthen CALD learner engagement with English and enhance employability in VET.

Workshop: Mapping the VET system for quality and outcomes

Megan Turner, UTS

This interactive workshop introduces systems mapping as a practical tool for understanding the complexity of the VET sector and identifying factors that influence quality teaching, student completion, and meaningful outcomes. Aligned with the ACDEVEG 2025 theme of “new horizons and possibilities,” the session encourages VET professionals to take a systems-level view of how policy, practice, and institutional structures interact. Participants will work collaboratively to map the VET system, identifying key actors, such as trainers, learners, RTOs, industry, and regulators, and the relationships and feedback loops that shape teaching and learning. Guided by prompts grounded in research and learning theory, the session will explore:

- What supports or hinders quality teaching?
- What contributes to student engagement and completion?
- Where are the leverage points for improvement?

Workshop: The new Certificate IV in Training and Assessment: (How) do we know how it is being taught?

Prof Erica Smith, Federation University

This workshop focuses on the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE40122) as the main TAE qualification. Around 39,000 people annually studied the old Cert IV from 2018-2023; Diploma of VET enrolments, in contrast, averaged under 1000 a year (Smith, 2025).

The workshop will begin with information about the changes to the Certificate IV TAE, to ensure a level of shared understanding. Participants will then share their experiences with the new Certificate, gained through delivering or studying the qualification, planning teacher recruitment programs, managing new teachers, or in other ways. Participants will discuss their views about the qualification and the data that the sector needs about the new qualification and its delivery, and on research projects that should be undertaken. A list will be collaboratively workshopped and shared via relevant practitioner groups, and with relevant government bodies and stakeholders.

Workshop: Future-ready VET educators: building career adaptability through Savickas' lens

Melanie Evangelista, RMIT

Using career construction theory (Savickas, 2002, 2013), this practitioner workshop investigates the career adaptability of VET teachers. Career adaptability We will explore how adaptable VET teachers are, and how adopting an adaptability lens can enhance the relevance, responsiveness, and sustainability of their training provision. Drawing on recent research and practitioner insights, this session will unpack the psychological and contextual factors that shape adaptability in VET settings. Participants will be introduced to practical tools for assessing and developing career adaptability, including movement-based activities, unpacking real-world scenarios, and reflective prompts designed to foster self-awareness and agency. Special attention will be given to culturally responsive strategies that support diverse trainers and learners, particularly in emerging industries. Through interactive discussion and hands-on exploration, practitioners will consider how career adaptability can be scaffolded across professional development programs, curriculum design, and classroom practice. The presentation will also highlight how adaptability intersects with career identity, resilience, and lifelong learning—key themes in contemporary workforce development.

Workshop: PD with Impact: reimagining PD for VET teacher education

Michele Tocci, Chisholm TAFE

How can professional development (PD) for VET educators move beyond knowledge delivery to create lasting transformation in teaching practice? This interactive workshop invites participants to explore PD with Impact—a research-informed framework that embeds behavioural change and enhances educator effectiveness. Grounded in findings from an International Specialised Skills Institute (ISSI) Fellowship supported by the Victorian Skills Authority (2021–2023), the session draws on global research, expert interviews, and applied work with trade educators at a Victorian TAFE. The evidence highlights why traditional one-off workshops fail to achieve sustained outcomes, and demonstrates how behavioural science and adult learning theory can be harnessed to build PD that is iterative, engaging, and impactful. While the focus is on practical strategies, the workshop also opens discussion on how these approaches can inform the design of future PD models across the VET sector, aligning with the conference theme of new horizons and possibilities for policy and practice.

Research Papers

Research paper: Exploring the experiences and impact of compliance obligations for new VET teachers

Emily Barter, University of Melbourne

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Australia is highly regulated and subject to audits from multiple regulators. ‘Problems’ within the sector are commonly addressed through reform and tightening of compliance requirements. VET teachers are frequently overlooked in relation to their experiences of compliance. This presentation will focus on the application of an ecological perspective (EP) in the analysis of findings. The EP proposed by Biesta and Tedder (2007), in relation to teacher agency, has been adapted to provide a holistic way to understand and interpret participants’ experiences and their enactment of compliance. Using an EP enables an exploration of how past experiences (iterative dimension), current context (practical-evaluative dimension) and projections about the future (projective dimension) can influence both decisions and actions of new VET teachers in the present, and how they shape their aspirations (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Priestley et al., 2015).

Research paper: Future-ready educators

Michele Tocci, Chisholm TAFE

Professional development (PD) for vocational education and training (VET) educators is widely acknowledged as essential for teaching quality and workforce readiness. Yet traditional models of PD—often characterised by one-off, content-driven workshops—rarely translate into sustained behavioural change. This research presentation explores how VET teacher education can be reimagined to foster future-ready teaching practice through behaviourally informed approaches. Drawing on an international research fellowship (2021–2023) supported by the International Specialised Skills Institute and the Victorian Skills Authority, the study investigated the question: How can global strategies be adapted to ensure VET professional development drives sustainable behavioural transformation?

Research paper: Co-creation of VET assessments: strengthening industry connections

Rajesh Iyer, RMIT

Assessment is at the heart of competency determination in vocational education and training (VET). Yet, research and sector feedback reveal a persistent gap between training delivery and industry needs, leading to inconsistencies in assessment quality. This project explored how closer industry collaboration in assessment design can bridge this gap and enhance learner outcomes. A comparative study of Australian practices with leading European models across Spain, Estonia, Finland, Denmark, and Hungary revealed valuable insights. European VET systems, particularly through the Dual VET model, embed strong industry partnerships where students undertake significant workplace training alongside classroom learning. These models demonstrate clear benefits: higher graduate employment rates, stronger alignment of skills to workforce demand, and greater employer confidence in graduate capability. The findings argue for a cultural and structural shift in Australian VET; assessments must reflect the way industry evaluates competence, not just classroom performance.

Research paper: Co-designing the case-based pedagogy and assessment in vocational teacher training

Dr Oksana Razoumova, Victoria University

Industries across Australia are facing mounting pressure to respond to rapid technological change, digital transformation, sustainability demands and growing social complexity. This has intensified the need for targeted workforce training, positioning education providers, particularly in the vocational education and training (VET) sector, as key agents in addressing emerging skills gaps and promoting innovative ways of approaching teaching and learning. This is particularly evident in teacher education in preparation for linguistically diverse learners persist across school and adult learning contexts. In response, this presentation proposes a case-based pedagogical model. This presentation highlights how VET educators' professional identities are shaped by evolving expectations, institutional pressures, and the need for critical reflection. Particularly in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), where certificate and diploma qualifications remain key to the sector, there is a need to capture and reflect educators' knowledge, skills, and lived experience to support ongoing professional growth.

Research paper: VET teachers' use of learning theories to reframe teaching practice

Anthony Pearce and Prof Erica Smith, Federation University

Vocational Education and Training (VET) teachers in Australia typically enter the profession with minimal formal preparation in pedagogy, leaving them without a strong theoretical foundation to support their teaching practice. This research explores how learning theories shape the professional understanding of teaching practice in the VET sector. This study draws on qualitative analysis of reflective responses from 32 VET teachers enrolled in a university-level subject on learning theories. The project examined their responses about how learning theories could explain and help prevent challenging teaching situations they had encountered. Many participants were encountering these theories for the first time and applied them retrospectively to understand what was happening in their teaching environments and how they could improve their teaching. Responses highlighted challenges experienced by teachers and the nuanced application of learning theories to interpret and respond to them. Their accounts reveal both the difficulties of teaching without theoretical grounding and the reflective influence learning theories has on VET teaching practice. We argue that this represents an enhanced form of reflective practice with important implications for VET teacher education and professional development.

Research paper: VET professional development: a managerial paradox

Christopher Ward, Deakin University

This presentation examines a critical challenge facing Vocational Education and Training (VET) teaching quality, where new horizons and possibilities for policy and practice emerge. Sustained professional development (PD) is paramount for VET practitioners to thrive in these new horizons (Dymock & Tyler, 2018). Yet, a disconnect exists between the acknowledged value of PD and its application within Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). Part of my PhD research into the value of VET PD addresses the question: How do RTO managers and VET practitioners articulate and navigate the value and provisioning of professional development? The findings highlight how prevailing institutional power dynamics, particularly those shaped by economic rationales and assumptions of "productivity" constrain VET practitioners' PD (Connell, 2013; Down et al., 2017; Nakar & Olssen, 2021). This tension hinders the VET sector's ability to adapt to industry demands and new pedagogical approaches, reducing the VET sector's overall effectiveness. This presentation explores the implications of this managerial paradox and argues for the development of more sustainable VET practitioner-centred PD models, contributing to the broader conversation on elevating VET teaching.

Research Paper: Paid to Learn Initiative

Dr Tryon Francis, TAFE SA

To address lecturer workforce shortages in the trades, TAFE SA partnered with the Department of State Development to deliver a pilot initiative: the Paid to Learn (PTL) program. Funded by the department, this pilot was designed to develop, implement, and evaluate a structured pathway for industry professionals to transition into vocational education roles. Modelled on a successful program in New South Wales, the pilot engaged eight industry professionals to fill educator vacancies across two faculties: Construction and Trades, and Defence and Agriculture, which included disciplines such as engineering, automotive, building, and construction. Over 12 weeks, participants received wraparound support while being paid to complete the TAE40122 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. This accelerated model enabled a fast-tracked transition into teaching roles, addressing critical workforce gaps while maintaining quality standards in vocational education. This presentation explores TAFE SA's approach to implementing the PTL program, its outcomes, and key considerations for other TAFEs and dual-sector providers looking to support industry professionals in becoming educators. It also examines broader sector challenges related to lecturer shortages and potential strategies for sustainable workforce development.

