National Skills Standards Council

The NSSC commenced operations on 1 July 2011 as a committee of the Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE).

As one of several Standing Councils that report to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), SCOTESE is the successor of the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment. This change in structure reflects COAG’s goal to strengthen Australia’s vocational education and training sector.

The National Skills Standards Council was established from 1 July 2011, signifying the implementation of a decision made by COAG in December 2009.

**Functions**

As detailed in its Charter, the NSSC’s key functions are to:

- Develop and maintain the national standards for regulation of vocational education and training, for approval by SCOTESE.
- Provide advice to SCOTESE on the development and implementation of the standards applying to vocational education and training.
- Provide information, through SCOTESE, to the regulators of vocational education and training on the implementation and interpretation of the national standards and on issues of quality standards generally in the vocational education and training sector.
- Inform the vocational education and training sector on the national standards and any changes to the standards.
- Advise SCOTESE on the operation of the regulators of vocational education and training.
- Endorse Training Packages.
- Approve Tuition Assurance Schemes under the standards for the regulation of VET.

**Developing and maintaining national standards**

The NSSC is responsible for developing and maintaining the national standards that regulate the vocational education and training sector for approval by SCOTESE, and for advising SCOTESE of any issues relating to the standards and their implementation.

These national standards encompass:

- the regulation of RTOs
- the development and endorsement of Training Packages
- accreditation of courses
- the operation of regulators and course accrediting bodies (this includes the Australian Skills Quality Authority and the individual regulators in non-referring states)
- collecting, analysing and disseminating data.

In developing advice for SCOTESE, the NSSC undertakes research and analysis to ensure that the national standards represent best practice. This research includes comparisons with international systems, input from key stakeholders and submissions from the Australian Skills Quality Authority and state regulators.
Informing regulators

The NSSC provides information to the regulators of vocational education and training, through SCOTSE, on interpreting and implementing the national standards. This supports effective operation and regulation by regulators.

Information provided by the NSSC may include specific issues arising from the interpretation and implementation of the national standards, including risk management and procedures for the national suspension and cancellation list. It may also include any other general advice on standards which will improve the operation of the national training system.

Informing the VET sector

The NSSC is responsible for providing information to the vocational education and training sector on the national standards and any changes to these standards.

As required, the NSSC may develop communication strategies around specific changes to the standards, in consultation with regulators and as approved by SCOTSE, to ensure that changes are well known and understood.

Operation of regulators

The NSSC is responsible for advising SCOTSE on the operation of the regulators of vocational education and training, to ensure the consistency and quality of the implementation of the national standards.

The NSSC conducts its own research, analysis and stakeholder consultation to inform this advice, together with any information reported by the regulators.

The NSSC also commissions third party audits of the Australian Skills Quality Authority and state regulators in non-referring states at least every three years. Additional audits may be conducted to examine emerging issues or respond to the concerns of stakeholders. These audits aim to maximise the consistency and accuracy of the application of the national standards by the national and state regulators, and examine regulators’ performance against the regulator standards as well as the consistency of regulation within and between regulators.

Training Packages

The NSSC endorses Training Packages, develops related policy and oversees quality assurance activities.

In making decisions to endorse individual Training Packages that meet current and future workforce skill development needs, the NSSC must be satisfied that:

- the Training Package meets the requirements of the standards for development and endorsement
- relevant key stakeholders have been consulted in development of the Training Package and are supportive of any changes proposed
- relevant state and territory government authorities have been consulted in the development of the Training Package and about the implications for implementation
- following endorsement by the NSSC, the regulators take responsibility for ensuring that RTOs deliver Training Packages according to the requirements of the qualifications.

Tuition Assurance Schemes

The NSSC is responsible for approving Tuition Assurance Schemes under the standards for the regulation of RTOs.
Relationship with other elements of the national training system

In undertaking its responsibilities, the NSSC reports to, collaborates with and/or consults with the following bodies and organisations.

**Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment**

As one of its committees, the NSSC operates under the direction and approval of the Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE). SCOTESE also acts as a conduit for information between the NSSC and the regulators of vocational education and training.

SCOTESE sets the NSSC’s strategic priorities and approves its annual work plan and budget. The NSSC reports on its operations against its work plan at each SCOTESE meeting, and provides an annual report, including a financial statement, to SCOTESE.

**National Senior Officials Committee**

As the committee of officials supporting SCOTESE, the National Senior Officials Committee (NSOC) is closely involved in the work of the NSSC. Papers provided to SCOTESE by the NSSC are forwarded to NSOC for information and discussion, but proceed to SCOTESE without alteration. The NSSC may also submit other papers to NSOC for decision, information or forwarding to SCOTESE.

**Regulators of vocational education and training**

The NSSC maintains operational independence from the Australian Skills Quality Authority and regulators of vocational education and training in non-referring states. This separation of standard setting from the regulatory function is designed to maximise the independence of the respective bodies, improve probity and minimise conflicts of interest.

Through SCOTESE, the NSSC provides information to regulators about interpretation and implementation of the national standards, and on quality standards generally in vocational education and training. The regulators provide regular reports to the NSSC on the application and regulation of the standards.

**Tertiary Education, Quality and Pathways Principal Committee**

As a principal committee that supports SCOTESE, the role of the Tertiary Education, Quality and Pathways Principal Committee (TEQPPC) includes advising on matters relating to maintaining the quality and international reputation of tertiary education in Australia and the regulatory framework across the tertiary education sector, including agreement to national vocational education and training standards.

As part of its work, the principal committee is responsible for progressing high level policy work associated with the quality of the national training system, including issues relating to the quality of assessment and offshore delivery.

To ensure effective communication between the two bodies, the chair of the NSSC is a member of TEQPPC, while NSOC acts as a conduit for information between the principal committee and the NSSC.
**Data and Performance Measurement Principal Committee**

The Data and Performance Measurement Principal Committee (DPMPC) is a committee of SCOTESE that provides advice on matters relating to performance against national tertiary education targets, improving data collection and broadening measurement.

The NSSC communicates with the principal committee in relation to national standards for data collection, assembly and dissemination.

**Industry Skills Councils**

Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) are responsible for developing Training Packages in accordance with the standards for Training Package development, as set by the NSSC.

ISCs are required to submit Training Packages and a case for endorsement to the NSSC for assessment against the standards.

**Australian Qualifications Framework Council**

The Australian Qualifications Framework Council (AQFC) is responsible for the standards for qualifications contained within the AQF, which includes qualifications across the education and training sectors.

The NSSC consults with the AQFC to ensure that standards for Training Packages and accredited courses are consistent with the AQF. It may also provide advice to the AQFC on any issues relevant to the intersection of the AQF and associated policies with the national standards for regulation of vocational education and training.

**Membership**

The National Skills Standards Council comprises of nine expert members and three ex-officio members. Members have been appointed by the Australian Government Minister with responsibility for vocational education and training, in close consultation with State / Territory Ministers.

Provided below is a brief biography of the founding members of the NSSC.

**EXPERT MEMBERS**

Members have been appointed based on their relevant expertise, so as to maximise the independence and objectivity of the Council in setting national standards for the regulation of vocational education and training.

**John Dawkins AO, Chair**

The National Skills Standards Council is chaired by Mr John Dawkins AO.

John served for 18 years in the House of Representatives and, from 1983 to 1994, was a member of the Governments of Bob Hawke and Paul Keating as Finance Minister, Trade Minister, Employment Education and Training Minister and finally Treasurer.

Since leaving politics in 1994 Mr Dawkins has advised Australian universities, State and foreign governments on
education and training issues. He has worked with The World Bank, UNESCO and the OECD on Education reform projects.

John was Chair of the National Quality Council from June 2010 to June 2011. He is also Chair of the Australian Qualifications Framework Council, which advises the Ministers on the maintenance and development of the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Adrienne Nieuwenhuis

Adrienne is currently the Director - Quality, Tertiary Education, Science and Research for the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology. She joined the South Australian executive service in 2010, following 20 years experience in academic and student administration in higher education, her most recent position being that of Senior Adviser: Academic Policy and Programs at the University of South Australia.

In her current role, Adrienne is accountable for the provision of strategic leadership; policy advice and investment direction to support tertiary education, science and research in South Australia. She is a key contributor in the implementation of the State’s Skills for All strategy, ensuring the State retains its reputation for high quality education and training and that training providers in receipt of public funding meet the highest standards of quality.

Adrienne is currently responsible for the strategic management of and accountability for a range of regulatory services derived from the Training and Skills Development Act 2008, and has been working closely with the Commonwealth to manage the many changes and challenges in establishing national regulatory systems for VET and higher education.

She holds an Honours degree in science and a Masters degree in educational administration.

Tom Karmel

Dr Karmel took up the position of Managing Director, National Centre for Vocational Education Research in August 2002. Prior to this position he held senior appointments in the Federal government areas of education, employment, labour market research and the Bureau of Statistics.

His research interests have centred on the labour market and the economics of education, focussing on empirical modelling, and he has a particular interest in performance indicators both in higher education and vocational education and training.

Tom has an honours degree in mathematical statistics (Flinders), and a Masters of Economics and doctorate from the Australian National University (The impact of increasing education levels on the Australian workforce).

John Vines OAM

John Vines has been Chair of the Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA) Industry Skills Council since 2004.
Through various government committees, John Vines has contributed significantly to national policy development around professional education and leadership skills training. A civil engineer, John has an economics degree and an MBA. He is a member of the Minimum Wages Panel, Fair Work Australia, Chairman of Austbrokers Countrywide Financial Services Group, a Director of the Innovation Xchange and of Carroll and Richardson, and Chief Adviser, Vocational Education and Training, Baotou Municipal Government, China. He is also a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

He has been a member of a number of Government Boards and Inquiries including a member of the Australian Science, Technology and Engineering Council (1991–1997), a member of the Prime Minister’s Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (1990–1997) and Deputy Chair of the Australian Government’s Industry Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills (1993–1995). He was also a member of the Victorian Premier’s Knowledge and Innovation Science and Engineering Council (2000–2003). Between 1984–2008 he was Chief Executive of the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers, Australia (APESMA).

John was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for his contribution to the development of the skills of engineers and scientists, and for his contribution on a number of government science and technology bodies. In 2003 he was also awarded a Centenary of Federation Medal.

**Margaret Haseltine**

Margaret Haseltine has more than 30 years business experience in a broad range of senior positions and 8 years Board Directorship. A proven executive leader, Margaret has delivered significant achievements in the areas of change management, governance, organisational culture and profitability.

Margaret was CEO of Mars Food Australia for 5 years from 2004 after holding a number of key Executive and Senior Committee roles since commencing with the company in 1988. During her time as CEO Margaret’s responsibilities included full P & L management and leadership for a $380M food manufacturing business employing more than 580 people. She was also responsible for running the Mars Inc. supply chain for Australasia with a $1bn portfolio.

As owner and manager of her own consultancy business, New Climate, Margaret works with companies looking to achieve long term sustainable development and growth. She also holds Non-executive Director roles with AgriFood Skills Australia, NCS International, Arinex and Central Coast Grammar School, and is Chair of the Central Coast Campuses Advisory Board.

**Megan Lilly**

Megan Lilly is the Director - Education & Training for the Australian Industry Group. Prior to this she was the Chief Executive Officer of Business Services Training Australia, the national industry advisory board for the business services and related industry sectors. Before joining the national board she held several senior management positions in various Victorian TAFE institutes.

Ms Lilly is Chair of Manufacturing Skills Australia, a member of the Australian Qualifications Framework Council, the Victorian Skills Commission as well as the Australian College of Education. She has a Masters in Educational Policy & Administration.
Berwyn Clayton

Berwyn Clayton is Director of the Work-based Education Research Centre at Victoria University. She has had over twenty five years experience in the vocational education and training sector. During that time she has worked as a teacher, curriculum development manager, professional developer, evaluator and researcher. Prior to her current position, Berwyn spent ten years as Director of the unique Centre Undertaking Research in Vocational Education (CURVE) at Canberra Institute of Technology. A founding member of the Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association Berwyn was the Association’s president from 2000 to 2004. In 2001 Berwyn was made a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators for her contribution to student learning and teaching in vocational education and for contributions to educational scholarship and research in vocational education. Berwyn has published and presented widely on competency-based assessment and recognition, organizational development and workforce development practices in the VET sector.

Berwyn’s research expertise and knowledge of vocational education has been acknowledged by her inclusion in a number of national forums on critical issues impacting on VET practitioners and practice. These have included amongst other things Chair of the National Project Reference Group for the Review of the Diploma in Training and Assessment for Innovation and Business Skills Australia; the Productivity Commission’s VET Workforce Study Roundtables; the National Quality Council’s Design Model of Streamlined Training Packages Experts Forum and the OECD Review and Systemic Innovation Study Experts Forum in 2008.

Professor Valerie Braithwaite

Valerie Braithwaite completed her PhD in Psychology in 1979 at the University of Queensland, looking at how human values could both link us to and distance us from each other and our institutions. She joined the academic staff at the Australian National University in 1978, and held a full-time position at ANU until 2010, teaching in the Psychology Department, and holding research positions in a number of interdisciplinary units, most notably the Research School of Social Sciences and the Regulatory Institutions Network. She held leadership positions in both these institutions, breaking new ground in partnering with the Australian Government to set up the Centre for Tax System Integrity from 1999 to 2005. In 2002, she was recognized by the University for exceptional performance in equity and diversity, in 2005 she received the Vice Chancellor’s Award for Career Achievement, and in 2009 she became a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.

Valerie Braithwaite researches the ways in which individuals and groups engage with regulations imposed by government and other authorities. Her books include Bound to Care, Taxing Democracy, and Defiance in Taxation and Governance. She has co-authored Trust and Governance, Shame Management through Reintegration, Regulating Aged Care, Anomie and Violence, and Pillars and Shadows. She has advised government in areas of aged care, affirmative action, taxation, immigration, and work safety.

Valerie Braithwaite continues to hold the position of Professor in the Regulatory Institutions Network in the School of Regulation, Justice and Diplomacy at ANU and to serve as an advisor on regulatory policy.

Pat Forward
Pat Forward was elected to the position of Federal TAFE Secretary of the Australian Education Union (AEU) in January 2004. She previously held the position of Federal TAFE President for six years, and was at the same time Vice President TAFE in the Victorian Branch of the AEU. She has taught in Victorian TAFE Colleges, at university and in schools. She is an advocate of the public TAFE system in Australia, and a critic of the damaging effects of competition and marketisation. She is committed to maintaining and extending the status of the profession of TAFE teaching, for all TAFE teachers.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Ex-officio members are appointed based on the position that they hold. They are to provide advice and guidance to the Council to help inform deliberations. Ex-officio members are not required to represent the views of their stakeholders, rather they are appointed based on the expertise and knowledge associated with their role or position.

Ex-officio members have the same rights and responsibilities as experts members, except for the ability to vote on Council matters.

Robert Griew (Commonwealth Government)

Robert Griew is the Associate Secretary of DEEWR with responsibility for overseeing the Tertiary Education, Skills, International and Indigenous Strategy Cluster. This involves:

- leading the Australian Government’s skills reform policy agenda, providing policy advice regarding training responses to skills shortages and the vocational education and training system and administering a range of programs to respond to industries’ skills needs
- managing programs that assist the development of workforce skills, including the Australian Apprenticeships system, adult language, literacy and numeracy skills
- developing and maintaining a strong, diverse higher education system
- exploring and applying innovative approaches to a range of social policy challenges, including social finance and support for social enterprises
- providing leadership across all levels of government and the international education sector to support the sustainable development of a world-class and globally connected international education and training system in Australia
- working with Indigenous people and the corporate and training sectors to ensure access to all levels of education and training to improve economic participation.

Robert has a 25 year career delivering health policy and programs at the Commonwealth level, as well as in a number of states and territory jurisdictions. He has run public health, Indigenous, ageing and early childhood education programs.

Robert joined DEEWR in 2009 from the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. He was Secretary of the NT Department of Health and Community Services for four years from 2003. For three years in the late 1990s Robert was also CEO of the AIDS Council of NSW.

Interspersed with his public sector career, Robert has also worked as a consultant advising on organisational development and public health and as a public health academic.
**David Collins (State and Territory Government)**

David Collins is General Manager, State Training Services for the NSW Department of Education and Communities.

David is responsible for advising the NSW Government on skills and employment issues; managing the NSW training market to meet industry and community skills needs; overseeing the employment and training of over 165,000 apprentices and trainees across the state; and increasing employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people, those with a disability and people in regional areas.

David has an extensive background in skills policy and program delivery at state and Commonwealth level. He is a former member of the NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board and the National Quality Council as well as a number of other national taskforces and advisory committees.

He has a Bachelor of Arts (Communications).

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**Alan Robson AM CitWA (Higher Education Standards Panel)**

Emeritus Professor Alan Robson AM, CitWA

Professor Alan Robson recently completed eight years as Vice-Chancellor of The University of Western Australia.

He has been Chair of the Group of Eight Universities (2007-2010) and Deputy Chair of Universities Australia (2005-2011); Deputy Chair of the Council of the National Library (1998-2005); a member of the Western Australian Science Council (2003-2009); and the CSIRO Board (2003-2008).

He was awarded the Australian Medal of Agricultural Science. In 2003, he was made a Member of the Order of Australia, and awarded a Centenary Medal. In 2009, Professor Robson was made a Citizen of Western Australia.