



Australian Government
Department of Employment
and Workplace Relations



Coalition
of Peaks

First Nations VET Leadership Roundtable

Co-Chairs

The Coalition of Peaks
The Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

with

State and Territory Skills Officials

State based First Nations Partner organisations

First Peoples Disability Network

Lowitja Institute

First Nations Media

Alliance of First Peoples Independent Education and Training Providers (AFNIETP)

Secretariat for National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners (NAATSIHWP)

National Indigenous Employment and Training Alliance (NIETA)

Indigenous Allied Health Australian Government (IAHA)

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council (NATSIEC)

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)

Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care

National Indigenous Australians Agency

CO-CHAIRS' MESSAGE

First Nations Partner Organisations and Federal, State and Territory Government Skills Officials come together for the Inaugural First Nations VET Leadership Roundtable.

On 18 March 2024, Federal, State and Territory Government Skills Officials and First Nations Partner organisations met in Tarntanya-Adelaide on Kurna Country for a roundtable on Vocational Education and Training (VET). The Roundtable was co-chaired by Ms Catherine Liddle, Acting Lead Convenor of the Coalition of Peaks (Peaks), and Ms Anna Faithfull, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) Skills and Training Group.

There is a collective commitment by all governments to increase efforts to Close the Gap and improve outcomes for First Nations people in the VET system, as reflected in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This is echoed in the recently agreed National Skills Agreement, the first intergovernmental agreement to include a Closing the Gap commitment and actions.

The Roundtable offered leaders the opportunities to share stories and begin a conversation on what partnership between First Nations peoples and government must involve to improve VET outcomes.

“The National Skills Agreement is the first intergovernmental agreement that embeds Closing the Gap within it and is guided by the four Priority Reforms”.

Co-Chair, Ms Catherine Liddle (Peaks)

All governments are committed to ensuring that the design and delivery of VET is done in full and genuine partnership with First Nations peoples. This means listening to, and acting on the insights, experiences and collective expertise of First Nations people and organisations from across the sector; honouring the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reforms.

The inaugural First Nations VET Leadership Roundtable represented a collective first-step towards working in partnership for the improvement of the skills and training sector, by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“This is an opportunity to listen, learn and build trust... to rethink the way we do things in the VET sector”.

Co-Chair, Ms Anna Faithfull (DEWR)

Over the course of the day, partners identified and discussed challenges facing the sector, and areas for focus and action. This included sharing ideas around strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled sector, growing a First Nations VET workforce, better understanding the skills pathways from school through to employment, and critically, supporting First Nations learners from commencement through to completion of apprenticeships and qualifications.

Woven throughout these conversations was a clear and common goal and purpose: *to nurture and support a First Nations VET sector where culture and self-determination is at the core of training delivery for First Nations learners.* It was acknowledged throughout the day that to do this properly

will take time, and that working in genuine partnership, taking a place-based approach and listening to the needs and desires of First Nations community will be key.

“We believe in the power of truth telling... From little things, big things grow...

Today we are all going to grow big things”.

Dr Belinda Russon (Co-Chair, Alliance of First Nations Independent Education and Training Providers)

VET has the power to change lives, bring positive change within communities and contribute to the nation’s prosperity. The potential of VET is profound, especially when education is driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations, with the necessary support from Government.

Across the country, new ways of working are being established between government and First Nations partner organisations to drive change across the VET sector. Discussions highlighted that all partnerships borne from this Roundtable should enact a sharing of power and risk, built on respect and trust. We heard the need for resourcing to support these arrangements, and for greater transparency and accountability from governments as part of shared decision making.

“This is the first time in history that there has been a group like this – including representatives from across governments and First Nations Peaks – coming together in the same room to work through a national intergovernmental agreement; how it will work and be implemented”.

Co-Chair, Ms Catherine Liddle (Peaks)

“We need the space and the time to work through what’s best for the sector and for community.”

Ms Julia McIntyre, Kimberly Aboriginal Medical Service

In moving forward together, it is important that we consider the pace of change and support the capacity of all partners to actively participate. The Roundtable provided a wealth of insights and was a clear demonstration of the power of storytelling. Through sharing our experiences and listening to each other, together we will move from intention to action. We acknowledge and thank all partners for their rich contributions to conversations throughout the day.

Key outcomes from the Roundtable will be consolidated into an outcomes report from the event and shared with partners. The Roundtable will reconvene in June 2024 to carry on the momentum and commitment of all partners in progressing this work.

***“Here’s the thing about partnership; if you’re not feeling uncomfortable,
you’re not trying hard enough.”***

Co-Chair, Ms Catherine Liddle (Peaks)

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The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations website has more information on the [National Skills Agreement](#).

The Closing the Gap website is here you can find the [National Agreement](#).