

# Smart and Skilled

SMART AND SKILLED UPDATE – NO. 219 - 220

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## 1. 2023-24 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE (ECEC) VET SCHOLARSHIPS NOW OPEN

The NSW Government has committed over \$12 million in scholarships to help grow a strong, skilled Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) workforce pipeline.

The 2023-24 ECEC VET Scholarships Program will help offset the costs associated with studying for students wanting to make a difference in the lives of children, families and communities in NSW.

Successful ECEC VET Scholarship applicants will be eligible to receive up to:

- \$3,000 for Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care
- \$3,000 for Certificate III in Outside School Hours Care
- \$5,000 for Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care
- \$5,000 for Diploma in School Age Education and Care.

Applications are non-competitive and will remain open until the allocated budget is exhausted or 30 June 2024. All eligible students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, are encouraged to apply.

This new round of scholarships will help ECEC educators to progress their careers and is available to students enrolled in Smart and Skilled. ECEC VET scholarships providing financial support is just one of the many ways the department is invested in creating a strong, valued ECEC workforce in NSW.

For more information on the ECEC VET Scholarships Program, please visit the [program's web page](#).

## 2. NATIONAL SURVEY ON THE DRAFT REVISED RTO STANDARDS

As part of national work to improve quality training delivery, the Commonwealth Government is starting a pilot phase on the revised draft RTO Standards.

The Commonwealth is conducting focus groups and simulated performance and monitoring activities with a sample of RTOs identified by states and territories, RTO peak bodies and the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA). The piloting activities are intended to ensure:

- RTOs of different types, sizes and focus can demonstrate compliance in different ways;
- there is flexibility to enable excellence and innovation;
- regulators can regulate effectively against the revised draft Standards.

After the pilot phase, the Commonwealth Government will publish pilot outcomes on its website: <https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-reform/quality-reforms>. The Commonwealth Government will further refine the draft revised Standards based on the pilots and the finalised Standards will go to Skills Ministers for agreement in early 2024. The Commonwealth will also develop guidance materials, regulatory policies, practices and tools to support the sector, informed by the pilot outcomes.

We expect the finalised Standards to be released in early to mid-2024 and to take effect from January 2025.

### **3. NSW VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) REVIEW**

The NSW VET Review is a comprehensive examination of the vocational education and training sector. Now in its consultation phase, the review is focused on identifying the strengths, gaps and opportunities for improvement in skills development and training, to support our students and workforce.

Led by an expert panel and supported by the NSW Department of Education, the review is following a 3-phased approach. Phase 2 is now underway and involves extensive stakeholder engagement and a digital forum where the public can have their say. The discussion paper supporting this consultation phase poses questions to prompt feedback and engagement across 4 key themes:

- Boosting student success
- Placing TAFE NSW at the heart of the system
- Delivering VET in NSW
- Preparing VET for the future.

An interim report from Phase 2 will be delivered to the NSW Government for consideration at the end of 2023, with a final public report delivered in mid-2024.

[Go here](#) to read more and download the discussion paper.

### **4. POTENTIAL CAUSES OF OVERPAYMENTS AND RESOURCES TO ASSIST PROVIDERS**

The department recently conducted a review of Training Activity Data submitted by providers to the department, as required under the Contract. The department is looking at circumstances where it appears payments of Subsidy (and Loading, if applicable) have been made to providers under Smart and Skilled due to inaccuracies in Training Activity Data and how this can be avoided.

The department has identified some of the circumstances in which the above is occurring.

**a. Overpayments related to Credit Transfers & Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

An overpayment has occurred when a Credit Transfer/RPL has been submitted after the last milestone submission and before the Commitment ID has been finalised. This causes a recalculation of subsidy/loading to a lesser amount and the difference cannot be subtracted from any further payments due to Commitment ID finalisation and no further payments received.

**b. Overpayments related to reporting data for a superseded qualification.**

The department has identified that reporting of superseded qualifications is resulting in incorrect data submissions and overpayments.