



Riverland High Schools

School profile

- South Australia
- Provincial
- Government
- Year 11 to 12
- Third party external RTOs, both TAFEs and private providers
- Over 20 VET courses in 10 industry areas in 2015
- 280 Year 11 to 12 VET students across the four schools in 2015

Four regional high schools in the Riverland region of South Australia have collaborated with Berri Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institution to form the Riverland High Schools cluster. The schools involved are: Glossop, Loxton, Renmark and Waikerie High Schools, with Glossop High the lead school. The purpose of the cluster was to establish a regional hub to enable the secondary schools in the area to develop partnerships with the TAFEs and local Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to improve trade training delivery. Students are bussed to Berri, where most of the vocational education and training (VET) classes are held at Glossop High senior campus or at Berri TAFE, next door. Students enrolled in Fitness, Horticulture and Construction are bussed from Berri to Renmark to undertake their programs.

Program background

Each of the four schools began offering VET programs individually and training existing staff to deliver the programs. There were some challenges with this model: individual schools could not offer a wide choice of VET programs; it was difficult to maintain high quality training and equipment standards for recognition of points towards the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) or for entry to industry and jobs.

A cooperative model between the four schools who outsource VET delivery to third party RTOs has proven to be beneficial for all students. The program has grown significantly over the last 10 years. For example, in 2006 Glossop High School had 10 students enrolled in a VET program in Year 11 and 12. In 2016 it had 117 students enrolled in VET programs.

It is well accepted in the school communities that students undertaking pathways to further education, training or and work will find completing a VET course is worthwhile and the success stories are many. On days the VET programs are delivered, some students travel over 100 kilometres to the central hub for training, leaving home very early in the morning to arrive in time for the 9.00 am start. It is a testament to the level of commitment and engagement students experience in the program that they manage this demand.

.....
A cooperative model between the four schools who outsource VET delivery to third party RTOs has proven to be beneficial for all students. The program has grown significantly over the last 10 years.
.....

Program features

Course selection and structure

Courses and qualifications chosen by schools and the structure of VET courses should be informed by an understanding of:

- the needs of students
- how VET supports career and employment pathways
- industry workforce needs
- school sector or jurisdictional policies
- funding priorities targeting VET towards particular industries or occupations.

Each school is responsible for the process of course selection. However, the principals, VET leaders and apprenticeship brokers establish parameters for what VET programs will be offered each year. Tenders for training delivery are then put out to both TAFE and private providers with price and delivery model being key points of interest and negotiation.

Each school then provides information to Year 10 students on the VET course offerings available for the following year. Students put in an expression of interest and participate in a 'Come and Try' day followed by



student counselling once they have confirmed their VET preferences. If numbers are greater than can be accommodated, a written application and interview process may be required.

Over 20 courses are offered at Certificates I to III level in: Agriculture, Commercial Cookery, Aged Care, Electronics, Engineering, Hospitality, Horticulture, Media, Fitness and Business.

Both the needs of students and the needs of industry are considered when selecting the VET programs. Despite the obvious need for agricultural or horticultural skills in the Riverland region, 'we find that students are looking for a broader range of offerings that can perhaps take them out of the region, lead them on a pathway to university or other offerings. I suppose ... [the fact that] they're brought up on the land doesn't necessarily mean it's what they want for themselves.' (VET Coordinator, Glossop High School)

.....
'We find that students are looking for a broader range of offerings that can perhaps take them out of the region, lead them on a pathway to university or other offerings. (VET Coordinator, Glossop High School)
.....

Facilities and equipment

Access to the right facilities and equipment is critical to the success of VET programs and is necessary to comply with VET delivery and assessment standards. The training package or accredited course materials provide information on what is needed. Identifying required equipment informs decisions about partnerships and accessing external expertise and equipment.

The four schools were successful in gaining significant funding for a Trades Centre, which enabled the upgrade of facilities at three of the schools—Glossop High School senior campus, Renmark and Waikerie High Schools—and also at Berri TAFE next door to the Glossop High senior campus. The Trades Centre agreement between the four schools and Berri TAFE stipulates that it makes equipment and facilities available to the school students one day a week and also provides trainers. The agreement covers Automotive, Electrical and Engineering industry areas.

Integrating VET

VET needs to be integrated into the fabric of schools and the broader curriculum. This may be through:

- *flexible timetabling*
- *language literacy and numeracy support*
- *assessment support*
- *support with other additional matters that students undertaking VET courses might require.*

Making the decision as a group of schools to timetable the VET programs on a particular day of the week has meant that all staff accept the need to be flexible about VET students not being able to attend regular subject classes on that day, as well as the need to give the students opportunities and support to catch up work missed.

With a Certificate III qualification counting towards an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) score, students whose ambition is to go on to university are able to gain substantial hands-on experience in their chosen career or industry area. For example, students interested in nursing might undertake Certificate III in Aged Care.

Students undertaking a School-based Apprenticeship or Traineeship within the South Australian education system achieve their SACE, which is mandatory in the Trade Schools for the Future program.



Employers ask that students entering into a School-based Apprenticeship or Traineeship have high level mathematical skills. The apprenticeship support services and industry mentors work with the schools to maximise the students' outcomes by ensuring they acquire the required skills and knowledge, for example, through their mathematics subjects.

It is now well accepted by parents, teachers and students that VET offers a useful pathway to employment, further education or training. The success stories in relation to both are many. The schools find many students are more engaged and attendance is improved as a consequence of undertaking a VET program that provides meaningful hands-on experiences that students see as connected to their futures.

Registered Training Organisation status

All VET is required to be certified by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Schools have a variety of ways of accessing RTO services:

- *becoming an RTO*
- *the school sector acting as the RTO*
- *partnering with an RTO (auspice)*
- *using an external RTO to deliver and assess all of the training onsite or offsite.*

Each of these options will suit schools in different situations. Whatever the arrangement adopted, schools and employers need to be confident that the RTO has suitably qualified trainers and assessors and access to the industry-standard equipment required.

The schools initially trained their own staff to deliver VET programs. However, this model was found to be difficult to sustain, both for students wanting to gain

points towards the SACE and for students hoping to gain entry to work or pathways into industry.

The schools now use TAFE and private RTO providers, adopting a competitive tendering process each year to select training providers on the basis of price and the delivery model. The provider has to be able to deliver one day a week, on a Thursday, and fit training within the school year. Price is important as the schools rely on Work Ready funding for most of their VET courses, and for all other courses parents are required to pay a fee.

The relationship with the TAFE, with which the schools have the Trades Centre agreement, has influenced the way VET is provided outside of the Trade Centre agreement, with TAFE also delivering courses in hospitality, IT and commercial cookery.

Student support

Vocational learning activities and pre-vocational programs support students to select the right VET course and pursue their chosen pathway to a career, employment or further education and training. Career education and opportunities to gain work readiness skills help students make informed choices and prepare them for learning in a workplace environment.

Each student undertaking a VET course at Glossop High is assigned a mentor, a teacher who has the responsibility for keeping regular contact with the student. The mentor monitors progress, provides support with written work or with any difficulties the student may be experiencing, and is in contact during work placements. The mentor also makes contact with the training provider to see how the student is managing the course and whether any assistance is needed.



Communication between the schools and the RTOs is highly valued, and the RTOs chosen through the tender process are good at providing information about how students are managing. The schools find that when students complete certificates while still at school they have more support than they would receive otherwise and, as a result, more students experience success.

The cluster of schools has access to the services of apprenticeship support network providers that work across seven schools in the region. There are 20 apprenticeship support networks providers based around South Australia in lead schools, and two are based at Glossop High. Their role is to broker arrangements between employers and students to have successful outcomes in apprenticeship and traineeship pathways. The support network providers move around the four schools in the group on different days, having appointments with students to discuss their career pathways, certificate levels for ATAR scores and employment outcomes that can be brokered with industry on the student's behalf.

The apprenticeship support network provider's service is highly personalised with the support network providers working directly with parents and students, VET coordinators, principals and school leaders, and with businesses. Over time the providers have built up relationships with many businesses and repeat business is high as a consequence of successful arrangements put in place previously. Businesses now approach the support network providers seeking similar outcomes that they experienced with previous students.

The support network providers find that, while students may lack the confidence to approach employers, once an initial connection and suitable arrangements are made with the employer, successful outcomes usually flow on from there.

'The schools work closely with the support network providers which has been set up to allow students to get into apprenticeships and traineeships while at school, and to start their VET pathway. ... we've found that employers come to us because they're able to get students with some experience through our VET programs, and we've these pools of students who are studying specific skills, whether it be automotive, or carpentry. They contact the school. The school identifies the students and even asks the RTOs, "Which students do you think are the ones that are best suited at this point?" The employer can then offer some structured workplace experience. That can result in a School-based Apprenticeship or full-time employment.'

(Assistant Principal, Riverland High Schools)

.....
Each student undertaking a VET course at Glossop High is assigned a mentor, a teacher who has the responsibility for keeping regular contact with the student. The mentor monitors progress, provides support with written work or with any difficulties the student may be experiencing, and is in contact during work placements.
.....

