



Trinity Bay State High School

School profile

- Queensland
- Metropolitan
- Government
- Year 7 to 12
- An RTO for delivery of some VET courses; partners with external RTOs for delivery of other VET courses
- 26 courses in 10 industry areas in 2015
- 1650 students enrolled in 2015

Trinity Bay State High School is a large, co-educational Year 7 to 12 government school located in the Cairns suburb of Manunda, Queensland. The school has significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, migrant and refugee populations. The school is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) providing some of its vocational education and training (VET) courses onsite and accessing others offsite through Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges and private RTOs. It also supports School-based Apprentices and Traineeships.

Program background

As the school's demography has changed over the past few years, VET has grown in importance as a valuable pathway. Increasing numbers of students are seeking pathways through which they can experience success at school and beyond, rather than the traditional university pathway.

The school became an RTO over 10 years ago offering subjects in the Information Technology and Business areas. Since then its scope of registration for delivery of VET courses has grown to include subjects such as Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways and several VET courses in the performing arts area. In addition the school has increasingly used offsite RTOs to widen its offerings. When VET was first offered it was not viewed as equal to a university pathway. A deliberate and ongoing process of changing the culture through information and the promotion of VET as a pathway to further education, training and work has been successful.

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.

Year 10 students have an opportunity to experience a VET course before they make their course selections going into Year 11.

The school selects the VET courses it offers based on what students enjoy and want to study, and on the availability of facilities and qualified staff. For example, Trinity Bay is a School of Excellence in Music, so offering Certificate qualifications in Music was a logical step. Some courses are offered because they provide strong skills for a wide range of jobs. These include Certificates I and II in Information Digital Media and Technology, Certificates I and II in Business, Certificate I in Skills for Vocational Pathways and Certificate II in Work and Skills for Vocational Pathways. All these courses are within the school's scope of registration as an RTO and are offered as part of the normal timetable.

Another criterion for selecting VET courses is employment opportunities in and around Cairns. Tourism, Hospitality and Health are major industry areas with current and future opportunities. In these areas the school does not have qualified staff and looks to TAFE and private providers to be the RTOs.

Trinity Bay is fortunate to have a TAFE college in close proximity. Year 11 students interested in Health enroll in Certificate II in Health Support Services and if they wish to continue in the field may choose to do a fee-for-service Certificate III in Year 12. Some of these students continue on to university to become a registered nurse, others do the Diploma course at TAFE to become an enrolled nurse.

A private RTO, with which the school works closely, offers Certificate II in Tourism. Unlike the TAFEs that



have Thursday only timetables, this training provider works in with the school's timetable. The course is available to students in Year 10, 11 and 12 and is suitable for students as a pathway to university. Students attend classes offsite in the city and there are high expectations of presentation and behaviour. Students are successful in this VET course and gain confidence from their experience.

The school partners with the nearby TAFE as an RTO for many of the trades courses and other RTOs for Electrotechnology, and Resources and Infrastructure. The school supports School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships and each year the Parents' and Citizens' Association employs a small number of Trainees in the school's Information Technology department.

Staffing

Access to the right staffing 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.

VET staff at Trinity Bay are expected to engage with two industry contacts each year: to investigate new developments in facilities, equipment and technology; to assess whether their teaching and resources are appropriate and industry current; and to make a judgement about whether there are gaps in their own knowledge or experience which requires them to undertake further professional learning.

Working with employers

Collaboration is a key component of the Preparing Secondary Students for Work framework. Involvement from employers and industry is critical when planning

for the implementation, delivery and assessment of VET for secondary students. Working with employers or work placement providers to provide access to quality and relevant workplace learning opportunities enables students to develop skills that are better aligned with workplace needs.

To manage the work experience program and find work placements for students, Trinity Bay uses an external non-profit organisation that helps many schools around Cairns. Each year the organisation finds approximately 300 students work experience placements and the VET coordinator places another 100 to 150 students. The school has found that the cost of employing this organisation is far outweighed by the benefits gained.

When working with employers the school makes clear what is required of the employer in relation to students. They also like to have a conversation about what might be considered to be reasonable expectations of the young person who is often undertaking their first workplace experience. The school wants employers to understand that the young person will probably make mistakes and the school is there to support the students and the employer to make it a positive experience for both.

The school is extremely protective and nurturing of its relationships with employers and works hard to enable students to succeed, avoid issues arising in the first place, and resolve them if needed.

The school always has students try a work experience placement ahead of committing to a longer placement. This allows both the employer and student to have a trial. Sometimes students decide that it is not the industry for them. This has been one of the most important lessons the school has learnt.



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.

Trinity Bay is an RTO delivering training towards 11 Certificates within its scope of registration. The industry areas covered include: Business, Information Digital Media and Technology, Skills for Work and Vocational Pathways, Auslan, Visual Arts, Music and Performing Arts. In addition the college partners with external RTOs to deliver courses offsite, in particular a TAFE college in close proximity.

The school has a dedicated RTO manager who is also the Head of Senior School. The RTO manager is responsible to ensure that the qualifications on the RTO's scope of registration are being delivered correctly, and that there is a high level of student engagement and strong completion rates.

When choosing external RTOs the school looks for those that have high expectations and good completion rates, and whose trainers engage well with students. 'We're looking for students to complete their VET

course, but not if they haven't done the work, so we do not put pressure on an RTO to sign students off.' (RTO manager who is also the Head of Senior School)

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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.

If a student at Trinity Bay wants to enroll in a specific VET course to transition into a particular career pathway which the school does not currently offer, alternative ways of making that pathway available are sought – for example, through a School-based Apprenticeship or Traineeship, or a fee-for-service arrangement with a reputable RTO. For Trinity Bay, establishing a student on the pathway into their career with the supportive backing of the school provides the basis for a successful outcome from their schooling. That means finding the right pathway for every individual student.



The Certificate I in Skills for Vocational Pathways and Certificate II in Work and Skills for Vocational Pathways are useful for many students but especially English as an Additional Language or Dialect students. These students value the opportunity to continue to learn English and practise their skills within a competency framework while they work towards a qualification.

The school has strong, regular communication with TAFE colleges and other private external RTOs about students' attendance and any other issues that may arise. The VET coordinator at the college is dedicated to managing offsite training provision and support for School-based Apprentices and Trainees. Over time the school has improved processes to identify students who are ready to manage attending offsite VET courses and those who are not. Students who have difficulty managing school workloads or who have a poor attendance need to improve before they will be considered to attend offsite VET courses. Attending a TAFE course or another VET course of interest becomes an incentive for students to improve.

Students sign a Code of Conduct that stipulates a whole range of matters including such things as attendance, the conditions under which attendance days may be changed, and what to do if they are unable to attend for example due to illness. The school's message is clear; that when students attend an external VET course or are in the workplace, they are representing themselves, as well as the school, for any future opportunities.

School rules are structured to reflect expectations in the workplace. For example, students are taught that employers expect them to be punctual and that they may

need to be in a workplace 10 minutes before the start time. If an employer raises concerns about a student's punctuality in a work placement, the VET coordinator will usually involve parents. For other concerns the VET coordinator will work with the students to improve the situation and ask the student what needs to change.

The school is able to draw on many resources to support students, for example, guidance officers, and tutorial support time after school. But the most important thing identified by Trinity Bay teachers is the whole-school approach to securing the success of VET students and for the provision and management of VET courses.

Review

The school's VET offerings are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they meet the needs of industry and employers. Similarly, jurisdictions and school sectors update their policies and procedures in line with funding priorities and skills needs. Schools should have in place review processes for the VET programs they offer to ensure these maintain their currency and effectiveness within both VET and school policy environments.

Trinity Bay sets high expectations for its students, aiming for 85 per cent of students to receive A to C grades, and an 85 per cent completion rate for VET courses. When reviewing VET programs the school considers the number of completions as well as student engagement in the programs. Students are surveyed and learner outcomes are reviewed to improve the quality of VET delivery and ensure students gain the skills and knowledge that will be of value to employers or for pathways into further education or training.

