

Submission to Vocational Education Reform Consultation Discussion Document

Engineering New Zealand (formerly IPENZ) is New Zealand's peak professional body for engineers. We are New Zealand's strongest and most influential voice on engineering issues. Our membership is growing, with more than 22,000 members who want to help shape the public policy agenda.

Engineering New Zealand supports the creation of a unified and coordinated national system of vocational education. We welcome greater engagement by industry and suggest that the engineering profession can provide a template for other industries.

INDUSTRY SKILLS BOARDS

Engineering New Zealand welcomes the opportunity for industry leadership of skills boards. In our view these should be broad based to include multiple specialisms within professions. This can provide for greater transferability between qualifications, as well as providing enough dedicated resources to meet the needs of niche areas that are essential to the economy and public wellbeing.

As an industry we are already working collaboratively with employers to anticipate future learning needs, meet current skills requirements and ensure high quality internationally benchmarked qualifications are delivered flexibly to meet student and employer needs. However, there are significant gaps and limitations in the current vocational education offering. There is also a lack of diversity in the workforce, there is regional variability in the quality and choice of educational offering, and there are gaps in essential skills areas. Strategically important areas can be poorly served under the current competitive model. An Engineering ISB may provide a structure that enables us to formalise and progress our collaboration at a strategic level with a clear focus on engineering career pathways.

Micro credentials and the degree apprenticeship schemes have been a way for industry to take ownership and allow the qualifications to be quickly updated and to adapt to industry needs and changing technology. At times employers have moved ahead of education providers and provided on the job training instead of, rather than to complement, formal education. Whilst this meets current needs in some areas, it does not

necessarily prepare the workforce we need for the future and may not attract more people into a profession which has ongoing skills shortages.

We support the intent of the reform for more work integrated learning with greater industry leadership and engagement at all levels. We agree that ISBs could provide impartial training advice and brokerage services for employers, many of who are members of engineering professional bodies like Engineering New Zealand or companion industry bodies and professional associations.

We consider it is important to develop a coherent approach to establishing the sector coverage of ISBs. We suggest that work the establish and transition to the ISB model should be progressed in parallel with changes to the institute of technology and polytechnic sector. This will ensure that ISBs are in a position to shape changes in the vocational education sector from an early stage.

We are keen to engage with the Ministry of Education, the Tertiary Education Commission, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and industry stakeholders in the engineering and ICT sector, including ITOs with links to the sector, to scope the creation of a foundation engineering skills board. This could provide a model for ISBs and ensure coherent coverage of a critical skills area.

CENTRES OF VOCATIONAL EXCELLENCE: A CASE EXAMPLE

The New Zealand Board for Engineering Diplomas (NZBED) is a collaborative partnership with participation, governance and management by industry players, providers and industry training organisations. In our view NZBED is a model for the operation of an effective Centre of Vocational Excellence.

NZBED was established in 2011 to oversee the National Diploma in Engineering and is recognised by NZQA as the qualification developer. In addition to curriculum and learning resource development, the Board also coordinates activities that are proposed to become the responsibility of the relevant ISB –the administration of national examinations for core courses and national moderation. The Diploma is a 240 credit, level six qualification, across four strands - Civil, Mechanical, Electrical/Electronics and Fire (which was added to the qualification during 2018). The Diploma could be extended to include other areas, such as Water Treatment. It consists of 16 courses to complete. There are five courses common to all strands and each strand has courses common to that strand that all providers teach, and electives available specific to regions.

A UNIFIED VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

We agree that one funding system will support learners, education providers and support ISBs to deliver a unified, coordinated national system that is flexible and nimble. Above all we want to see the expansion of vocational education so that more technicians and engineers are matched to the right jobs with the right skills for today and in preparation for the future.

We would like to meet with Ministry representatives to explore how we can facilitate the engagement of the engineering profession in the development and implementation of these necessary and welcome reforms.

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