

12 September 2024

Redesign of the vocational education and training system
Ministry of Education, Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Submitted by email: VocationalEducation.Reforms@education.govt.nz

To whom it may concern

Electricity Networks Aotearoa (ENA) appreciates the opportunity to submit on the redesign of the vocational education and training system and supports the objective of making ITPs (Institute of Technology and Polytechnics) financially viable.

ENA is the industry membership body that represents the 27 electricity distribution businesses (EDBs), listed in Appendix A, that deliver electricity to homes and businesses across Aotearoa. ENA harnesses the collective expertise of members to promote safe, reliable and affordable power for our members' consumers.

The EDBs of New Zealand own and maintain over 150,000 km of electricity lines across the country, serving approximately 2.3 million consumers. This critical national infrastructure supports the day-to-day wellbeing of New Zealanders and is vital to the functioning of the economy. To perform this function EDBs employ over 10,000 people and is a sector that is dependent on a high functioning vocational education and training system to ensure we can continue to deliver a reliable and sustainable electricity system.

The ENA supports the views provided by the EEA and Business NZ's submissions, and would like to supplement those with our comments provided below.

1. Disestablishing Te Pūkenga and Re-establishing Regional ITPs

The proposal to disestablish Te Pūkenga, and to re-establish regional Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs) as independent entities or as part of a federation anchored by the Open Polytechnic could potentially restore the connection between ITPs and their local communities and industries, fostering more regionally responsive vocational education.

However, the financial viability of these regional ITPs is uncertain, and the proposal admits that some may still struggle without the support of a centralised body. The federation model, while potentially beneficial, is untested in New Zealand and has the potential to create administrative complexities without a central governing body. The progress that has been made to have nationally consistent and co-ordinated strategic oversight could be lost with regionalisation and may result in inconsistencies in standards and delivery. We would also question whether 16 entities are affordable – is there a way to streamline this and provide strategic oversight over a consolidated number of entities and be more cost effective?

2. Establishing an Industry-Led System for Standards-Setting and Industry Training

Option 2B appears to be the status quo. What is not clear in either option is whether the industry Strategic Reference Groups will be maintained. Our experience is that these have been a valuable connection and way for the industry to be involved in vocational training and we would like to see these continued under either option.

3. Funding System Changes

Restoring funding levels for provider-based education could alleviate some of the financial pressures on ITPs and help ensure their sustainability. Shifting funds to support standards-setting may also enhance the quality and relevance of vocational training.

However, reducing funding for work-based learning might undermine this mode of education, which is crucial for industries requiring hands-on experience. The shift in funding might also lead to tensions between different parts of the VET system, particularly if the changes do not adequately account for the diverse needs of students and industries.

In summary, the success of the proposed changes will heavily depend on their implementation, particularly in ensuring financial sustainability and avoiding the reintroduction of complexities and inefficiencies that the current system aimed to eliminate. The proposals seem promising in concept but carry risks that need careful management to avoid repeating past mistakes.

ENA is happy to provide further information and assistance that would be helpful. Please contact Tracey Kai tracey@electricity.org.nz

Kind regards



Tracey Kai

Chief Executive

Appendix A: ENA Members

Electricity Networks Aotearoa makes this submission along with the support of its members, listed below.

Alpine Energy
Aurora Energy
Buller Electricity
Centralines
Counties Energy
Electra
EA Networks
Firstlight Network
Horizon Energy Distribution
MainPower NZ
Marlborough Lines
Nelson Electricity
Network Tasman
Network Waitaki
Northpower
Orion New Zealand
Powerco
PowerNet
Scanpower
The Lines Company
Top Energy
Unison Networks
Vector
Waipa Networks
WEL Networks
Wellington Electricity Lines
Westpower