

14 February 2019

Hon Chris Hipkins
Private Bag 18888
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON 6160

Dear Hon Chris Hipkins

Re: Vocational Education Reform and Workforce Development Councils (WDCs)

We write with regards to the Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE) and the proposed WDCs. We are keen to meet with you to discuss our concerns with the proposed WDC model and our collective option to address these concerns. Information and communication technology (ICT) and engineering are critical to New Zealand's economy and appropriate industry oversight of vocational training will support graduates, industry and New Zealand to thrive.

Together we represent the majority of the ICT and engineering profession in New Zealand, including many of the firms that drive the work undertaken by ICT and engineering professionals. Our work, and the future of the work we undertake, is reliant on the vocational education system and the graduates of vocational training programmes.

We're excited about the opportunity, within RoVE, to collectively address many of the challenges within the vocational education sector including the focus on preparing New Zealanders for the future of work.

We support the concept of Workforce Development Councils and the stronger industry voice these are intended to bring, however we want to both draw your attention to a far bigger opportunity to collectively boost science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and STEAM (STEM with arts included) areas, but also outline some very significant problems with the currently proposed WDC structure. In fact, left unchecked, we believe the current structure will damage our industries and significantly hamper the success of these reforms.

We have an alternative that is supported by our industries and with some small changes to the makeup of WDCs, will make a significant difference to the success of the WDCs and benefit to our industries, while benefiting all New Zealanders by more actively addressing future of work issues.

With the draft Education (Vocational Education and Training Reform) Amendment Bill progressing through the House, we understand you will soon be making decisions on the structure of the WDCs and these decisions will inform the drafting of Orders in Council allowing the WDCs to be stood up.

Representatives from our industries would very much like the opportunity to urgently meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss this in more detail, outline why we believe this is essential for the future of our industries and New Zealand, and work on a collective way forward we can support.

Concerns in brief

In the current model as we understand it, STEM-related fields are spread very thinly across WDCs and generally placed with other industries with very little or no commonality and with very different sets of challenges. In the case of engineering it appears to be even worse; the profession is split into multiple WDCs, following many years of the industry bringing engineering standards together.

Aligning areas with higher commonality into each WDC, such as those covered in this letter, will ensure a focused WDC containing similar industries, rather than each WDC attempting to engage with a collection of disparate industries with little in common.

Engineering, IT, Creative and Business also have increased complication in that, unlike the areas they have currently been placed with, they have very closely related degree pathways to consider. While this is out of scope for WDCs, the impact of not aligning qualifications at both levels could be devastating to our industry. A STEM or STEAM WDC could focus clearly on this alignment.

There are a range of other concerns that lead us to the conclusion that the current proposed arrangement won't work for our industries, such as unique skill requirements and challenges, fast growth in our industries, strong future-focus, the balance between the all-encompassing but specialist nature of our industries, and alignment with the Industry Transformation Plans being developed. These are outlined in more detail in the proposal sent to the Tertiary Education Commission and copied to your office on 18 Nov 2019.

Proposal in brief

We would like to propose a small set of changes that would lead to the establishment of a STEM or STEAM WDC including future-focused areas that have high commonality and similar challenges. This WDC would have a strong focus on the future of work and assist other WDCs by setting base standards for ICT and engineering, while overseeing the standards and qualifications in these areas. As ICT and engineering vocational qualifications are intrinsically linked to degree provision, the STEM or STEAM WDC would ensure appropriate oversight of this.

Appendix A attached outlines a high-level structure that would work without making drastic changes to the WDC model.

The WDC would include ICT and engineering, plus either or both of creative and business. We understand both of these areas also have similar and significant concerns with where they have been placed and would have a strong correlation with a STEM or STEAM-focused WDC.

Conclusion

We support the model of WDCs; however, have deep concerns about the WDC structure that has been proposed. We do not consider that ICT and engineering fit into the WDC structure proposed and that proceeding would be damaging to our industries. Instead we are proposing a solid solution that would meet your needs better, while being of significant benefit for our industries and the future of New Zealand as a whole. This also involves minimal changes to the current model.

We would value an opportunity to discuss options with you and to come up with a solution that is acceptable to both yourself and the industries we represent.

Thank your consideration. Please send any correspondence or replies to Paul Matthews, ceo@itp.nz or 021 705 212. We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

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CEO, IT Professionals NZ

Susan Freeman-Greene
CEO, Engineering NZ

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Emma Naji
Executive Director, AI Forum NZ

Neil Hamilton
GM, Canterbury Tech

Mary-Claire Proctor
Chair, CITRENZ

*CITRENZ is made up of all of
the Computing/IT schools
in the Polytech sector*

Brijesh Sethi
Chair, Quality Tertiary Institutions

*QTI is the peak body for quality
PTEs in New Zealand*

Appendix A: One possible model

One possible modification of the current WDC make-up proposal would be the creation of a STEAM WDC. This means the full WDC makeup would look like this:

- **STEAM:** IT, Engineering, Creative and Business.
- **Service Industries:** include “museums, libraries and archiving, hairdressing and beauty therapy, recreational facilities/venues and sport” from Creative, alongside the rest of the existing area. No Business / Business Admin.
- **Manufacturing and Logistics:** Either keep as a standalone or merge with Construction/Infrastructure. No IT or Engineering.
- **Construction and Infrastructure:** Either keep as a standalone or merge with Manufacturing and Logistics. No IT or Engineering.
- **Health:** Unchanged.
- **Primary:** Possibly include seafood processing and others or leave that with Manufacturing and Logistics.

An high-level overview of the commonality between the four areas of the potential STEAM WDC:

Sector	Commonality/alignment	Degree provision?	Current ITO coverage?	Industry Accreditation?
IT	Strong commonality with Engineering. Good commonality with Business (many polytechs have a combined business and IT school). Good commonality with a chunk of Creative (not all)	Yes	No	Yes
Engineering	Strong commonality with IT. Good commonality with a chunk of Creative (not all). Commonality with business in the context that many practicing also need business skills	Yes	Across several	Yes
Creative	A chunk of Creative has good commonality with all, a chunk less so. The whole sector would need to remain together.	Yes	No	No
Business	Far better commonality with our sectors than other Service Industries areas. Common issues such as degree provision considerations.	Yes	No	Yes