The Future Landscape for Qualifications
Foreword

This is the second policy development paper in an occasional series issued by the Victorian Qualifications Authority on issues relating to post-compulsory qualifications.

The VQA Board has described ‘making qualifications work for all Victorians’ as its central aim. The task involved is necessarily both immediate and prospective in nature. Not only is it a matter of determining how well current needs and aspirations - of individuals, industry and the community more generally – are being met, but of anticipating and identifying the many challenges and requirements in the future.

With this mind, we approached a number of influential figures in the field of qualifications in Australia and invited them to write a paper for us that critically reflected on what some of those future challenges are most likely to be, and on how the qualifications system in Victoria might best respond.

A noteworthy feature shared by all of the papers is the open quality of the concerns they encourage us to consider. A number of interesting questions are raised, not all of which have immediate or obvious answers. How are we to think through the current purposes required of qualifications, and in what ways have these changed over the years? Do qualifications remain a useful tool for organising what one author describes as “the enormous diversity of learning demands in a modern society”? There is some important thinking here around what some of these demands involve – new forms of work and organisation, a more complicated social world, and rapidly changing skills and knowledge including a greater prominence for tacit knowledge and informal learning. Caught up in this constant flux, how are qualifications to retain their credibility and currency amongst their critical users, be these education and training institutions, industry or learners themselves?

One particular insight provides a good anchorage from which we might begin to explore such questions. This is the shift in thinking about qualifications from product to purpose and from ends in themselves to the means through which to plan learning journeys. The papers in this collection pose some very important challenges to our thinking – and to our current and future practices. How might we develop and manage qualifications – and qualifications frameworks - to engage with such issues and to get the best outcomes for students?

There is good speculative thinking in these papers which we hope will provide the beginnings of a basis from which new debate and new approaches might be generated. We welcome dialogue around these issues in the immediate future and beyond, and look forward to any response others might wish to offer on the future of qualifications and qualifications frameworks.

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