

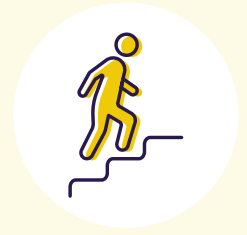
AUSMASA Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework Guidance Manual

Career

Attraction to VET – setting
realistic expectations



Attraction to VET – setting realistic expectations



This section is part of theme 4: Career pathways

This section is most relevant to the new-entrant and establishing stages. Attraction shapes who enters the sector and under what expectations they enter. The conditions that draw people into VET and the realities they encounter upon arrival have a direct bearing on whether early-career trainers and assessors stay long enough to develop and contribute.

Attraction to the VET workforce is typically gradual, informal and often incidental, emerging over time through industry experience rather than deliberate career planning.

What is it

Attraction to the Vocational Education and Training (VET) workforce in automotive and mining sectors does not follow traditional recruitment pipelines. VET is rarely considered straight from school or early in trade careers.



Attraction occurs after:

- Substantial industry experience.
- Through informal channels, personal relationships.
- Timing aligned with life stage and career sustainability considerations.

Why it matters

VET misses out on mid-career professionals because attraction occurs too late, when people are fatigued or burnt out, rather than at their peak capability.

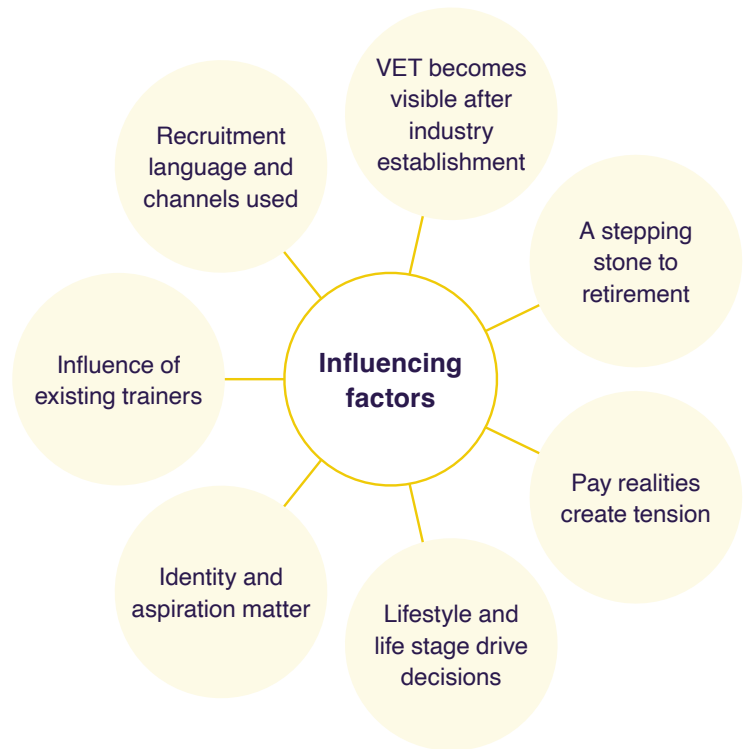
The sector relies too much on late-career, fatigue-driven transitions. Focusing on people in their late 30s to mid-40s, who have up-to-date skills and longer VET careers ahead, creates more sustainable workforce pipelines.

What we found

Becoming a VET trainer and assessor – influencing factors

VET becomes visible after industry establishment

- VET is seldom recognised until individuals gain extensive industry experience across various employers.
- Many people only find out about VET as an option when they meet effective trainers and assessors during their apprenticeships or training.
- A career as a VET trainer and assessor cannot be started directly after school, as it requires established vocational credibility.
- Trainers and assessors who start too early often lack the depth of knowledge that grants them authority with experienced adult students.



Pay realities create tension

- Experienced automotive technicians and mining professionals often earn more in industry than in VET roles.
- The difference can be well over \$30,000 to \$40,000 annually in some cases, with mining-related roles earning considerably more than any VET training equivalent.
- Pay imbalance is a deterrent unless offset by other values, such as work-life balance, reduced physical demands, stable employment, predictable hours, leave entitlements and professional autonomy.
- Ignoring pay realities reduces credibility with experienced professionals. Having honest conversations about the trade-off is more effective than avoiding it.
- Access to structured leave entitlements, particularly in public sector providers, represents a material lifestyle shift for those coming from fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) or minimal leave arrangements.

Lifestyle and life stage drive decisions

- Attraction often occurs when industry work becomes harder to sustain, particularly relating to the accumulation of the physical toll the work undertakes, FIFO arrangements becoming unsustainable and increasing family commitments.
- Many seek VET for improved work-life balance rather than career advancement.
- ‘Getting off the tools’ is a legitimate driver, but VET is not an easy option. Those entering primarily to reduce physical load often struggle or leave.
- Effective trainers and assessors combine the desire for more sustainable work with a genuine interest in teaching, sharing expertise and supporting students.
- Framing VET as continuing to contribute to the sector in a different capacity resonates more than framing it as a departure from industry.

Identity and aspiration matter

- Not all technical experts aspire to management or corporate progression.
- Many are motivated by the desire to give back, support the next generation and stay connected to their trade differently.
- Attraction improves when VET is framed as extending vocational identity, not leaving it behind.
- Automotive and mining professionals value being recognised as credible trade experts who teach, not as people who cannot continue in the industry.
- Imposter syndrome is real at the start. Experienced tradespeople describe shifting from feeling like the expert in the room to feeling like a novice when studying the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE). Strategies that recognise existing expertise from the beginning are more effective.

A stepping stone to retirement

- The VET trainer and assessor role is still widely seen, in both the sector and industry, as a retirement job or backup for those leaving due to age, injury or fatigue. The evidence in this section is most relevant to organisations seeking to attract people at the advanced career stage, before late-career fatigue sets in.
- This perception drives late-career, fatigue-driven transitions. People enter VET when they are ready to slow down rather than invest in a long teaching career.
- Early to mid-career professionals bring current industry knowledge, greater adaptability and longer potential VET careers.
- Organisations that deliberately position VET as a purposeful mid-career pathway and approach potential trainers and assessors early have had more success building sustainable pipelines.

Influence of existing trainers

- Word of mouth and respected role models are more influential than advertising.
- Many trainers and assessors were encouraged into VET by trainers they encountered and respected during their own training. Sometimes years before making the move.
- Visible, credible trainers and assessors in industry networks attract peers. Informal conversations in industry settings are consistently more effective than formal advertising.
- Existing trainers and assessors who maintain strong industry relationships and speak positively about their work are among the most effective attraction mechanisms available.

Recruitment language and channels used

- Traditional education job boards and corporate recruitment language do not reach experienced tradespeople.
- Terms like ‘professional’ can create barriers. Automotive technicians and mining operators often identify as tradespeople or technical specialists rather than professionals in the corporate sense.
- Language that emphasises passing on the tools of the trade, sharing skills and extending industry expertise resonates more strongly.
- The TAE is the second-largest recruitment challenge nationally. Requiring it as a precondition for entry deters technically credible candidates. Approaches that support TAE completion through employment are more effective.
- Placement matters as much as language. Industry association channels, trade forums, direct personal contact and employer networks reach the intended audience far better than generic job boards.

What helps

Attracting industry experts into training through early engagement, low-risk trials, phased transitions and honest messaging.

The following approaches were described as effective in attracting industry experts into VET roles.

Build relationships through ongoing industry engagement

- Incorporate trainer and assessor visits to workshops and sites. A regular presence builds trust over time.
- Create enterprise delivery and workplace engagement opportunities.
- Attend original equipment manufacturer (OEM) training and specialist skill programs where experienced staff are the audience.
- Attend industry advisory groups, trade events and equipment demonstrations.
- These settings place trainers and assessors in front of technically experienced people and create natural opportunities to raise awareness of VET as a future pathway.

Make VET visible at the right time through the right channels

- Review industry association websites and subscribe to industry newsletters.
- Review trade-specific forums and social media.
- Make direct approaches through industry contacts.
- Establish employer partnerships and enterprise relationships.
- Host information nights with existing trainers and assessors present, as a low-pressure, peer-to-peer conversation is more persuasive than promotional material.

Early identification before fatigue or burnout

- Recognise informal mentoring and coaching behaviours in operational roles.
- Identify those naturally sought out by apprentices and junior workers for help.
- Notice supervisors and team leaders with evident teaching capability.
- Plant the seed early. Approach potential trainers and assessors before late-career fatigue sets in and position VET as a purposeful mid-career pathway.
- Offer gradual exposure, through toolbox talk delivery, apprentice buddy roles or short assessment observation activities before any commitment is required.

‘Try before you buy’ opportunities

- Create opportunities to observe training delivery.
- Invite guest delivery or codelivery of small segments.
- Arrange short-term secondments or trial arrangements.
- Provide casual or sessional delivery before permanent commitment.
- Provide approaches that allow individuals to test their interest without career risk, so that they can make an informed decision about whether VET aligns with their circumstances.

Phased transitions that maintain industry connection

- Implement an 80/20 or 70/30 operational/training splits initially.
- Maintaining operational roles while building training capability.
- Positioning training as career progression within organisations, not departure.
- Offer time-limited initial commitments, typically one to 2 years, with a defined option to return to operational roles.
- Align delivery schedules with existing roster patterns, particularly in mining FIFO contexts.

Use language that resonates with technical experts

- Emphasise teaching, coaching, sharing expertise, not educational professionalism.
- Highlight maintaining technical credibility and industry relevance.
- Avoid leading with compliance, administration and paperwork.
- Frame the role as extending industry expertise, not leaving it behind.
- Use trade-familiar phrasing rather than corporate or education sector language.

Be honest about realities, including pay

- Do not oversell or create unrealistic expectations – credibility matters more than glossy marketing.
- Acknowledge pay imbalance and what offsets it, through alternative benefits such as stable employment, predictable hours, leave entitlements and reduced physical demands.
- Where hybrid roles are available, or where industry work can continue alongside casual training, attraction is stronger.
- Support TAE completion through employment rather than requiring it as a precondition for entry.
- The gap between expectation and reality is a primary driver of early attrition. Honest attraction is also a good retention practice.

Industry impacts

The industry itself impacts the ability to attract VET lecturers. Several industry impacts can be mitigated through targeted attraction strategies.

Automotive contexts

Automotive industry impacts

- Overtime, diagnostic specialisation and senior technician roles produce earnings significantly above VET trainer and assessor salaries.
- Physical demands of workshop work, heat and long hours are common drivers toward VET consideration.
- Attraction occurs through dealer partnerships, RTO relationships and OEM training engagement.
- The electric vehicle (EV) transition is creating new currency pressures. Trainers and assessors need access to current technology to remain credible.
- The trainer and assessor role can still carry a 'couldn't cut it in industry' stigma in some workshop cultures. Having visible, credible trainers and assessors can challenge this.

Attraction strategies

- Leverage dealer partnerships as primary attraction channels.
- Use RTO relationships to identify and engage potential trainers.
- Engage technicians through OEM training and specialist upskilling programs.
- Emphasise opportunities to maintain technical credibility with evolving vehicle technology.
- Position training as a pathway that reduces long term physical strain while retaining technical relevance.

Mining contexts

Mining industry impacts

- Fly-in, fly-out (FIFO) loadings, allowances and operational rates create substantial pay differentials. For example, gaps of \$30,000–\$40,000 or more are not uncommon.
- FIFO fatigue and family separation are significant drivers toward VET consideration.
- Roster patterns create natural availability for casual training delivery. Organisations that align delivery to rosters have attracted trainers and assessors who would not otherwise be available.
- Word of mouth and peer networks are particularly strong in mining. Credibility within operational networks is essential.
- Some specialist mining roles pay considerably more than any training equivalent, making attraction in those areas particularly challenging.

Attraction strategies

- Use enterprise RTOs to identify potential trainers early from operational staff.
- Align attraction offers with FIFO roster patterns to enable participation during off-rotation periods.
- Offer casual or sessional delivery opportunities to fit around operational roles.
- Tailor attraction approaches to remote and site based contexts.
- Acknowledge high industry earnings and focus on non-pay benefits (for example, reduced fatigue, family time and predictability).

When it is working

Indicators that attraction is working

- Increased informal enquiries about training roles from industry contacts.
- Willingness from experienced technicians to explore guest or casual delivery.
- Earlier consideration of TAE qualification when support and pathways are clear.
- Stronger internal pipelines from operational to training positions.
- Reduced reliance on late career, fatigued transitions, with more mid-career entrants in the pipeline.
- Successful recruitment through industry networks rather than relying on formal advertising.
- Positive word of mouth from existing trainers and assessors, attracting their industry peers.
- Enterprise identification of potential trainers and assessors before disengagement occurs.

Success stories

Large TAFE automotive: building relationships through workplace engagement

A TAFE delivering automotive manufacturing qualifications attracted a high-quality trainer through sustained, relationship-based industry engagement rather than formal recruitment. As part of its standard delivery model, trainers regularly visited manufacturing workplaces to meet apprentices and complete training plan signups.

These visits built trusted relationships with supervisors and team leaders over time. During one such engagement, a team leader became increasingly interested in how training operated. The visiting trainer recognised strong indicators of teaching capability. By observing clear communication, patience with complex technical concepts and credibility with both apprentices and workshop staff.

When a position became available later, the trainer contacted the team leader directly. The appointment was successful. Regular workplace engagement created a natural pipeline, enabled early identification of teaching potential and produced a credible recruitment pathway that formal advertising would not have reached.

Mining enterprise RTO: structured transition for operational staff

A mining enterprise registered training organisation (RTO) strengthened its trainer and assessor pipeline by proactively identifying experienced operators and technicians before late-career fatigue occurred.

Rather than open recruitment, the enterprise targeted supervisors and senior operators who demonstrated coaching capability in operational roles. Training roles were positioned as career progression within the organisation, not a departure from operational work. Initial commitments were time-limited to one to 2 years, with a defined option to return to operational roles.

Early arrangements involved 80/20 or 70/30 operational-to-training splits, maintaining operational connection and income while building training capability. Over 12 to 18 months, the balance shifted based on individual capability and preference.

The approach reduced perceived career risk, increased uptake among technically competent staff and created a sustainable internal pathway.

Private RTO: rostered casual delivery in mining

A private RTO delivering mining units of competency attracted and retained trainers by aligning delivery with existing mining roster patterns. Rather than recruiting full-time trainers, the RTO targeted experienced mining operators through rostered arrangements and offered casual training during their scheduled time off.

This provided an additional income stream during nonoperational periods while allowing trainers to maintain their primary roles and earnings. The RTO adapted delivery schedules to match trainer availability rather than requiring fixed timetables.

Trainers maintained operational currency, used roster breaks productively and tested their interest in training without committing to a permanent career change. Several casual trainers subsequently transitioned into more regular arrangements.

Helpful resources

The following resources are provided as optional references for those seeking practical tools or further reading aligned with the information in this section.

- [**Diversity Council Australia – Inclusive recruitment tools.**](#)
- [**NCVER – Attracting industry experts to become VET practitioners: a journey, not a destination.**](#)

Continue Exploring

You'll find additional tools, resources and related guidance in the **Career** section of the AUSMASA Trainer and Assessor VET Career Framework, including practical self-assessment tools, supporting guidance and links to related topics.



**Mining and
Automotive**
Skills Alliance

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