

# Regulating apprenticeships and traineeships

## VRQA compliance and enforcement framework

We seek to eliminate or minimise harm, and the risk of harm, to apprentices and trainees.

### What harms?

Harms are identified in the November 2022 [Ministerial Statement of Expectations](#) for the VRQA, and through the VRQA's detailed understanding of the sector.

#### Injury or death

Some apprentices and trainees work in occupations and industries where there is risk of injury or death, such as construction and manufacturing. If they are poorly supervised, this increases the risk. We go to workplaces to make sure that employers are meeting their obligation to provide proper supervision by a suitably qualified or experienced person.

#### Poor quality workplace experiences

Too many apprentices and trainees 'drop out' – they don't get qualified because of negative experiences in the workplace. This harms their future career prospects. We target those employers who have consistently poor outcomes (such as low levels of completion, high cancellations, dissatisfaction and safety concerns).

#### Exploitation and mistreatment

The scope of our responsibility is limited to training contract compliance, but we know that other government agencies hold important information about employers that exploit or mistreat apprentices and trainees. For example, when they are not paid properly, forced to work in unsafe conditions, or bullied. All government regulators that come into contact with apprentices and trainees share information. If we receive information from one of our co-regulators that an employer exploits or mistreats their apprentices and trainees, we will cancel their approval to employ apprentices and trainees in Victoria.

#### Insufficient learning and progress

The career prospects of apprentices and trainees are harmed when they are denied opportunities to learn the skills and competencies set out in their training plan, or to be released from the workplace to attend their registered training organisation. We monitor training plans. We look for training plans that are not maintained to record progress (or where there isn't one at all), to make sure apprentices and trainees are progressing as they should.

### Powers of the VRQA

#### Sanctions

The [VRQA Regulatory Approach Statement 2022](#) explains that our starting point is to seek compliance through education and support. However, where necessary, we will use our full range of regulatory powers and tools to secure compliance.

Our main sanctions are the power to cancel:

- an employer's approval to employ apprentices and trainees in Victoria
- training contracts.

#### Authorised Officers

We have a team of Authorised Officers that visit workplaces to check compliance. They are deployed

- in response to problems, when apprentices, trainees or other parties notify us of possible non-compliance
- through an annual planned work schedule of visits to workplaces where there is the highest risk of harm.

Any apprentice or trainee with concerns can contact us on:

- [vrqa.apprenticeships@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:vrqa.apprenticeships@education.vic.gov.au)
- 1300 722 603

#### Informing the public

Each year we conduct regulatory campaigns and publish enforcement and compliance priorities centred around minimising the harms to apprentices and trainees identified in this document.

This notifies the public of where we plan to deploy Authorised Officers in the field, including

- industry/industries (for example, automotive, electrical)
- qualifications (for example, Certificate III in Hairdressing).

We will publish the results of our regulatory campaigns.

### Compliance framework

This framework puts the risk of harm at the centre of its model of compliance.

