NACCHO Training and Assessment Education Demonstration Project Evaluation

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NOTES ON LANGUAGE USED IN THE REPORT

NACCHO provided funding to ACCHOs and AMSs to release staff to undertake the TAE Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE); we use the term ACCHO as the inclusive term, consistent with NACCHO practice unless an evaluation participant used the term AMS in a quote.

We use the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to be inclusive of both Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, consistent with NACCHO's approach.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ACCH	Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health (sector)
ACCHO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
ACC***H***RTO/ACCRTO	Aboriginal Community-Controlled ***Health*** Registered Training Organisation/ Aboriginal Community-Controlled Registered Training Organisation
AH&MRC	Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of NSW
AHCSA	Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia
AHP	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner
AHW	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker
AMS	Aboriginal Medical Service
ATSIHRTONN	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health RTO National Network
DEWR	Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
DoHDA	Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Aging
FNHWTP	First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NACCHO	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
RPL	Recognition of prior learning
SEWB	Social and emotional wellbeing
TAE	Training and Assessment Education
TAEDP	Training and Assessment Education Demonstration Project
VET	Vocational Education and Training

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Executive summary

The Aboriginal Community-Controlled Training and Assessment Education Demonstration Project (TAEDP) commenced in early 2024, led and coordinated by the National Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO). The TAEDP was funded by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) until June 2025.

Through the TAEDP, NACCHO has supported over 40 Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health (ACCH) sector staff from 22 workplaces across all jurisdictions nationally, to study and complete the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Four cohorts of TAE students each undertook a condensed and intensive program, involving four one-week (away from base) training blocks with a range of learning and wraparound supports provided while on block and then remotely between blocks.

While a standalone project, the TAEDP contributes strongly to effective implementation and outcomes for NACCHO's flagship and longer term workforce program, the *First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program* (FNHWTP), which funds and supports 500 traineeships across the sector.

The delivery RTO selected, MRWED, had a strong track record of delivering the TAE and experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. Together with three Aboriginal Community-Controlled RTOs (ACCRTOs), they hosted the training in four locations nationally. NACCHO staff worked in partnership with MRWED to design and deliver the training, and were attended every training block for each cohort. The provision of wraparound support was a significant feature built into the project design, a high proportion of which was led by NACCHO. It included a student-centred community of practice (CoP) as an additional learning and support platform through which best practice was shared as students embarked on their new journey as trainers and assessors.

The TAE is the base qualification required for trainers and assessors within the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system to teach VET qualifications, combined with relevant industry experience. A priority for TAEDP participants was becoming qualified to deliver Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner qualifications (Certificate II through IV), as well as other qualifications relevant for current and future staff in the ACCH sector.

Evaluation activities and participants

The evaluation activities selected for the TAEDP represented a mixed methods approach (quantitative and qualitative), ranging from student demographic and completion data, through to a combination of yarning circles, interviews, rating scales, surveys, document review, and review and co-analysis workshops. The evaluation participant groups represented all key stakeholders, with a very high representation of students (38 or 79% of all enrolments), along with two of the three host ACCHRTOs, the delivery RTO, six workplaces (29%) and the NACCHO Workforce and Training team.

Summary of key outcomes

The evaluation explored six main aspects of the TAEDP, which examined how well it was implemented and what progress was made towards the TAEDP objective, as well as provided direction for its future.

1: The training experience

TAE students shared a consistent story of a high quality, well-structured training experience within a culturally safe environment that was led by an "outstanding" trainer. They appreciated the flexibility with which the course was delivered to respond to their work and future training contexts.

Three standout features of the course structure for students were the peer support, which was fostered and enabled by NACCHO and MRWED, the opportunity for peer networking across diverse locations (jurisdictionally and geographically) through the group activities they undertook – including the NACCHO-led Community of Practice, and the diversity and interactivity built into the delivery by the trainer, which modelled realistic options they could adopt and develop in their future VET training and assessment work. They valued the face-to-face delivery, how assessments were organised and streamlined to minimise repetition, as well as being embedded into training blocks wherever possible, and the opportunity to visit a range of ACCRTOs, as this immersed them in their potential future workplaces.

Key ingredients for it being a culturally safe training experience for students included: 1) the approach of the trainer and his willingness to learn and grow with each training cohort; 2) the constant presence, support and guidance of Aboriginal staff from NACCHO; and 3) having an all or predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student group.

2: Student support strategies

Learning and wraparound supports were offered by MRWED as the delivery RTO, including mentoring, tutoring and personal support. NACCHO was the main provider of wraparound support, which included the Community of Practice, having an Aboriginal staff member present at all training blocks, personal check-ins and support (practical, cultural and social-emotional wellbeing), transport while on block, and both travel funding and advice.

Workplaces also played a role, with their minimum requirement being paid time to attend week intensives, and an expectation to provide paid time to complete study requirements at work. Workplaces varied as to whether they offered other support, such as mentoring and tutoring, RPL support and extra travel funding.

Student views of this support were consistently very high for delivery RTO and NACCHO support in terms of it being sufficient, flexible and culturally safe. They believed the trainer was invested in the training, supported them every step of the journey and was committed to them succeeding. For NACCHO support, students emphasised the strong and effective working relationship between MRWED and NACCHO, NACCHO's excellent communication and action, and the unwavering care and support of NACCHO staff for students, where nothing was too much trouble.

Most students experienced a high level of support from their workplaces in terms of it being sufficient, flexible and culturally safe. Those whose had limited support, experienced this as detrimental to their study and the future application of their learning, and buffered this by leaning into the peer, delivery RTO and NACCHO support available.

3: Employer and RTO experiences

All interviewed employers expressed very positive opinions of the TAEDP, viewing it as an essential workforce development initiative, not only for the involved students, but for their ACCHOs and the ACCH sector, driving towards their collective need of having more work ready, competent and confident potential and existing staff. Employers were experiencing the benefits of student knowledge and skill development, as they apply their skills to direct training roles, local workforce development activity and supporting trainees in the FNHWTP. Further, all interviewed employers had retained their staff in training and/or workforce development roles. Employers emphasised the different and more positive experience and effectiveness of this NACCHO-led ACCH sector embedded approach to the TAE, compared to putting staff through public and private RTO courses, calling out the increased flexibility and level of wraparound supports as key features.

ACCRTOs who hosted the training willingly supported MRWED through providing access to their facilities, resources and staff, and expressed their respect for the TAE trainer. Their enthusiasm to support the TAEDP was driven by the high need for more qualified trainers and assessors with relevant industry experience so ACCRTOs can respond to the broader training needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce. Hosting the course exposed them to future potential staff, as much as it exposed students to future potential workplaces. One host ACCRTO had two staff participate in the TAEDP; both were still engaged but under a different arrangement through innovative industry-linked and ACCHO-based training delivery models.

The trainer from MRWED, as the delivery RTO, emphasised the value of the partnership with NACCHO, not just in course design but in training delivery and support for students. In fact, he viewed the wraparound supports provided by NACCHO, as well as through student peer support and his support, were a standout feature of the TAEDP model, closely followed by the flexible approach and the course structure. Similarly to students, he recognised the negative impact for students when workplace support was poor, often due to a limited understanding of why it was important to provide it, so strengthening the training and workplace relationship would be a priority in the future.

4: Student training and career journey outcomes

The student group represented diversity on a jurisdictional, geographic and age basis, with an even balance between students who were 18 to 40 years compared to over 41 years. A much higher proportion of women were enrolled (81%) compared to men.

Completion rates were very high; as of early August 2025, 39 students had completed their TAE, an 81% completion rate. As there are five continuing, and only four withdrawn students, there is potential for the completion rate to increase to 92%. This exceeds completion rates for equivalent TAE training by public and private providers, while reflecting the history of much higher comparative completion rates for ACCH sector-led and ACCRTO delivered training programs.

There is strong interest in tracking student career journeys to determine whether student aspirations to move into VET-related roles is realised, given the objective of the TAEDP is to support growth in the capacity of the ACCRTO sector's capability and capacity for meeting student and current ACCHO training needs. This has not yet occurred due to the short-term nature and available resources for this evaluation, although it has been designed to track career journeys if resources can be secured.

5: The TAEDP and FNHWTP relationship

As employers, ACCHO and RTOs based in ACCHOs described how TAEDP students were contributing positively to the training journey of and workplace support for trainees they have enrolled in the FNHWTP. They saw the TAEDP as a "*game changer*" that supported the FNHWTP to work more effectively, as a long-needed essential workforce development program in the ACCH sector, enabling a training and workforce pipeline that would result in having a larger pool of work-ready potential staff.

6: Future of the TAEDP

At the same time, along with the host RTOs, employers were conscious the TAEDP was a pilot that may not be refunded. They emphasised how vital it had been so far, but a one year project would not resolve a decade or more of workforce shortages, in training and assessment and the health workforce. They explained that the key features and high completion rates of the NACCHO model addressed long held and consistently raised concerns about the effectiveness of other public and private RTO models. Some went further to highlight the value of adopting a national model, as has occurred in the TAEDP, as this shines a light on the way forward for flexible and innovative training and education strategies that would be more sustainable for the ACCH sector.

Overall, the TAEDP has made substantial progress towards achieving its objective, which was "to strengthen the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health RTO (ACCHRTO) sector's capability and capacity for meeting student and current ACCHO training needs". This is evident based on the linked impact indicator for the objective: "a high proportion of TAE students complete their qualification and are employed as a trainer or assessor by ACCRTOs". A very high proportion of students have completed the TAE and have an aspiration to work as trainers and/or assessors in both ACCRTOs and ACCHOs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future of the TAEDP

Recommendation 1 – Funding continuation as an ongoing national program: Advocate for funding continuation as an ongoing national program, allowing for a minimum of two training cohorts per year, which will ensure ACCRTOs have capacity to meet current and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce training needs.

Recommendation 2 – Program name: Retain the TAEDP acronym but replace 'demonstration' with 'development' and 'project' with 'program' in the full name, i.e. *Training and Assessment Education Development Program*.

Recommendation 3 – NACCHO TAE course and delivery model: Ensure the funding envelope is sufficient to maintain all core features of the NACCHO TAE course and delivery model, and any recommended implementation improvements and expansions.

Recommendation 4 – Ongoing evaluation and student career journey tracking: Fund ongoing evaluation, with a high priority on student career journey tracking, so the second component of the impact indicator can be fully assessed.

Implementation of a future program (assuming Recommendation 1 is implemented)

Recommendation 5 – An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainer: Develop and source funding to implement a trainer succession plan so part and preferably all the TAE can be co-delivered or fully delivered by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainer in future. Consider strategies such as:

- a one year TAE graduate mentoring program, an ongoing TAE Community of Practice
- opportunities for upgrading the TAE to a Diploma in Vocational Education and Training.

Recommendation 6 – Assess viability of student feedback: Assess the viability of implementing the following student feedback:

- Could on-country training occur for the TAE?
- Should criteria be tightened so only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are eligible?
- Could the number of months over which the course runs be extended, while retaining the four blocks of intensive training, so there are longer time periods between blocks?

Recommendation 7 – Student travel: Centralise student travel coordination and bookings so they are managed by NACCHO.

Recommendation 8 – Workplace wraparound support: Establish a formal agreement or contract with student workplaces to enhance accountability for providing required workplace wraparound support.

1: Introduction

1.1 Overview of the TAEDP

The *Aboriginal Community-Controlled Training and Assessment Education Demonstration Project* (TAEDP) was led and coordinated by the NACCHO with funding from the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). As a demonstration project, it was funded for $1.2M over 15 months, commencing in early 2024 and concluding in July 2025.

The purpose of the TAEDP was to enable 40 Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health (ACCH) sector staff to study and complete the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, or TAE as it is usually known. Combined with industry experience, the TAE is the base and essential qualification required for trainers and assessors within the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system to deliver VET qualifications.

The TAE was delivered by MRWED, a non-Indigenous organisation that specialises in delivery of the TAE either in its own locations or client locations on a customised basis. NACCHO selected three different and nationally spread Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Registered Training Organisations (ACCHRTOs) as the training locations to expose students to potential future workplace environments, in addition to MRWED in Brisbane:

- the Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA) RTO in Adelaide
- the Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council of NSW (AH&MRC) RTO in Sydney
- Marr Mooditj, an Aboriginal Community-Controlled RTO or ACCRTO in Perth.

All three participate in the national ACCHRTO Community of Practice, created by NACCHO in 2023.

Commencing in 2023, NACCHO undertook comprehensive and unfunded planning and preparation prior to securing DEWR funding for the TAEDP. This included identifying and establishing a partnership with MRWED, who supported NACCHO's planning and preparation work, as well as mapping the entire project journey based on the six phases below and the roles of all key stakeholders.

1. **Project design:** This included deciding on matters such as eligibility criteria, funding for employers to facilitate participation of their staff (e.g. travel and accommodation reimbursement, travel allowance), the full funding of course fees, the number of cohorts and their timing, the location of training blocks and how student support structures would work (see Appendix A).

2. **Course packaging and pedagogical customisation:** NACCHO and MRWED designed the delivery of the 12 units of competency for the TAE40122 Certificate IV Training and Assessment and determined how they would be clustered across the four training blocks. There are six core and six elective units in the TAE. Where possible, the training was contextualised for students working in the ACCH sector and elective units were selected to best suit the skills needed for a trainer who would go on to work in an ACCRTO.

   Through this process, four standalone skill sets were created through strategic clustering of the units that were then aligned to the four blocks of the course (see Phase 4). In practical terms, this meant students would gain a meaningful and useable skill set and could apply it under supervision in the workplace. In this manner, students advance their skills and knowledge, whilst having the opportunity to acquire a range of relevant credentials over their journey, particularly if they did

not need to complete the full TAE for their work role or could not complete the full TAE at this time. If this occurs, they can complete at a later point, building on the skill sets already gained.

3. **Workplace promotion and expression of interest:** The opportunity to undertake the TAE through the TAEDP was promoted by NACCHO to ACCHRTOs as a priority. ACCHOs in the Northern Territory and Queensland who were strongly involved with the the *First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program*, as a linked current workforce program for NACCHO (see below), were also encouraged to participate so they could upskill staff who support trainees.

4. **Course coordination and training delivery:** NACCHO coordinated the four intensive weeks of face-to-face block training delivered in the following skill set clusters: Introduction to VET, Facilitation skills, Assessor skills and Supporting work-based learning (see Appendix D).

5. **Additional wraparound supports:** The wraparound supports built into the program are referred to in Appendix A and illustrated in Figure 8 in Section 3.2 of the report. This is consistent with existing VET knowledge about the value of wraparound support for achieving higher completion rates, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Guenther et al. 2017; Gwynne et al. 2020; Taylor, Lalovic & Thompson 2019).

   NACCHO-led a high proportion of the wraparound support, which included a student-centred community of practice (CoP) as an additional learning and support platform through which best practice was shared as students embarked on their new journey as trainers and assessors.

6. **Evaluation:** NACCHO comissioned an evaluation of the TAEDP and requested that all students participate in it as part of the application process. As outlined in Section 2, this included evaluation activities led by external consultants as well as monitoring activities managed by NACCHO.

While the TAEDP is a distinct program, NACCHO developed and implemented it alongside its flagship workforce program, which is operating from 2022 to mid-2027, the *First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program* (FNHWTP), funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Aging (DoHDA). The FNHWTP will support up to 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees to become Aboriginal Health Workers (AHWs) or Health Practitioners (AHPs) through undertaking Certificate III or Certificate IV qualifications in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care training package.

This integrated approach to implementing the TAEDP and FNHWTP has ensured the TAEDP both enables and extends upon what the FNHWTP can achieve. Alhough it is currently a time-limited project rather than a sustained program, the TAEDP assists the FNHWTP to drive towards one of its overall goals. This is reflected in the relationship between the program logics of the two programs. The FNHWTP has two high level goals – the first is more relevant to the TAEDP:

FNHWTP Goal 1: To increase the work ready Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker and Health Practitioner workforce for

FNHWTP Goal 2: To create and embed a high quality, culturally safe, flexible and scalable traineeship model in the ACCH sector.

The FNHWTP goals are supported by four objectives, one of which defines the change that the TAEDP is striving to achieve. It is the starting point for the TAEDP program logic.

TAEDP Objective: To strengthen the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health RTO (ACCHRTO) sector's capability and capacity for

The full TAEDP program logic is in Appendix B. It outlines the four strategies implemented to support the TAEDP objective, along with process indicators that describe whether and how well this has occured. Impact indicators are statements used to determine whether objectives are achieved. The impact indicator for the TAEDP objective is: *A high proportion of TAE students complete their qualifications and are employed as a trainer or assessor by ACCRTOs*.

1.2 The need for the TAEDP

Over 2022 to 2025, NACCHO undertook the *ACCHRTO Capability Project* with funding from the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). The project represented Action 5 in the 'Workforce' section of the *2021 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Sector Strengthening Plan*. This action was to "build community-controlled RTO capacity and improve the quality of RTO training within or linked to community-controlled health organisations" (Coalition of Peaks and Australian Government 2021, p. 18).

There were two key outcomes from this project. One was an *ACCHO Workforce and Training Gap Analysis* (NACCHO and Think Change Resolve 2024) to identify current and future ACCH sector workforce needs. The other was the co-design of a national plan for ACCHRTOs, called *Build Today, Lead Tomorrow - ACCHRTO Implementation Plan: A ten-year strategy to ensure sustainable, high-quality Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Registered Training Organisations 2024–2034* (NACCHO 2024).

There are currently 12 ACCHRTOs, which are a crucial component of education, workforce development and career pathways for the current and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce. For the many positions available and/or needed in the ACCH sector combined with the undersupply of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, VET level qualifications, from Certificate through to Advanced Diploma are essential. In this environment, there is increasing demand for ACCRTOs to deliver an expanded range of qualifications including, social and emotional well-being, counselling and mental health training, alcohol and other drugs, disability and aged care, and other community services and health qualifications.

This is well recognised in the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework* (Department of Health 2021), which includes a high priority on expanding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce in the ACCH sector, consistent with Key Reform 2 of the 2020 *National Closing the Gap Agreement* - Building the Community Controlled Sector (Coalition of Peaks and Australian Government 2020).

While there is strong desire for ACCHRTOs to step up to this task, their capacity to do so in the current VET funding environment remains a major restraint (NACCHO 2023, 2024). To do this, ACCHRTOs need sustainable operational base funding and sufficient staff with the right qualifications to deliver a diverse range of courses and skillsets relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health. In the funding submission for the TAEDP, NACCHO identified that:

> *…the capacity of our ACCRTOs to continue to deliver their existing scope, invest to expand that scope, as well as ensure appropriate delivery design, including 'wrap around' supports which generate [strong] outcomes and completion rates…, has been severely hindered by successive reductions in operational base funding. Critically, over time, this has resulted in severe shortages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander VET qualified trainers nationally. (NACCHO 2023, p. 2)*

The *ACCHO Workforce and Training Gap Analysis* report (NACCHO and Think Change Resolve 2024) expanded on the challenging funding environment in which ACCHRTOs are currently required to operate:

> *Although ACCHRTOs are community-controlled, not-for-profit providers, they are classified as private providers by governments, and are therefore unable to access operational baseline funding or loading for delivering training to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, who comprise the majority of their cohort.*
>
> *Currently, TAFEs nationally receive operational funding to support staffing and overheads, to deliver services and facilities to community, and support higher needs students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. We know that while some TAFEs and private RTOs deliver these qualifications, they do not, as noted above, achieve the outcomes or deliver same the number of graduates as ACCHRTOs.*
>
> *There is an opportunity, through negotiations on the new National Skills Agreement, to classify ACCHRTOs as public providers, or to create a separate category for ACCRTOs and fund these organisations through a centralised Commonwealth program. Either option would significantly improve the financial viability and sustainability of ACCHRTOs into the future. (p. 88)*

Together, NACCHO and ACCHRTOs are currently advocating for better funding arrangements through the National Skills Agreement.

HISTORY OF DISTINCTIVE AND SUCCESSFUL FEATURES OF ACCHRTOS

ACCHRTO/ACCRTOs consistently outperform TAFE and other public and private RTO providers. According to the most recently available figures, the 2022-23 completion rates, national completion rates for students studying with ACCHRTOs are 79% compared with 36% for TAFE and other public and private RTOs – more than double (NCVER research cited in NACCHO 2024, p. 4).

When both ACCHRTOs and ACCHOs are asked what may contribute to this difference, they usually emphasise cultural safety, strong industry connections, context-relevant teaching content and, usually unfunded, wraparound support or tailored support services (*beyond…* 2011; NACCHO 2024). Consequently, the ACCH sector has a strong preference for training its workforce through ACCHRTOs rather than non-Indigenous RTOs. This was evident in the second evaluation report on ATSIHRTONN in 2011, where it was emphasised how ACCHRTOs:

- *have direct relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health services, as they are based in a NACCHO Affiliate, ACCHS or are members of NACCHO or an Affiliate*
- *respect the principles of community control by using these relationships to ground their work in an understanding of the needs of both communities and the Aboriginal health industry*
- *understand education and training needs in Aboriginal health within their specific jurisdictions as well as at a national level, e.g. they understand who their participants are culturally, the situations they work within, and have a consciousness of the social, historical, political and socio-economic contexts that shape and impact on the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*
- *are committed and have the skills to design, implement and continuously improve culturally grounded student support mechanisms that facilitate peer support and learning, improve retention, strengthen confidence and extend learning strategies, e.g. they have the flexibility to accommodate ways of operating that respect cultural priorities and values, allow people to*

> *meet their personal and cultural obligations to family and community, and create a culturally safe environment. (beyond… 2011, p. 12-13).*

The last two points were reiterated in NACCHO's submission to the Australian Government Department for Education, Skills and Employment about the role of ACCHRTOs in the Department's *Skills for Education and Employment Program*:

> *Our ACCHRTOs focus on the provision of culturally competent, holistic care, and accessibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Unlike mainstream RTOs, key to ACCHRTOs is the coordinator role - someone to support students throughout their journey. It is for this reason that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers prefer to get their education through an ACCHRTO. (NACCHO 2022, p. 7)*

This statement is supported by more recent evidence based on research in the ACCH sector that outlines the types of barriers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can face in pursuing health careers and, conversely, what acts as enablers. Barriers can include: a lack of local role models to emulate, lack of recognition of health as a career option, limited schooling, lack of confidence, geographical distance from training options, financial pressures combined with travel costs, balancing study with family and cultural obligations, and racism and a lack of cultural safety (Bailey, Blignault & Carriage et al. 2020; Bailey, Blignault & Renata et al. 2021; Meyer et al. 2020).

Enablers can include: strong cultural identity, financial support to meet travel costs, easy to navigate recruitment procedures, culturally appropriate selection processes, cultural safety in teaching staff and education institutions, being in peer learning cohorts, local encouragement to apply for jobs, local community role models, community support, and community appreciation of health staff and health work (Bailey, Blignault & Carriage et al. 2020; Bailey, Blignault & Renata et al. 2021; Meyer et al. 2020).

Both the barriers and enablers are consistent with research on VET and higher education that is not specific to the ACCH sector (Guenther et al. 2017; Gwynne et al. 2020; Taylor, Lalovic & Thompson 2019). This research also supports how the provision of wraparound supports, which are central features of an ACCHRTO model of training delivery, leads to significantly higher completion rates and better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

CURRENT CAPACITY STRENGTHENING NEEDS FOR ACCHRTOS

The position of the ACCH sector over the last 15 years is that ACCHRTOs are best equipped to understand and respond to barriers and implement strategies that leverage enablers for training the current and future VET qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce. Therefore, ACCHRTOs need to be positioned and resourced to do this successfully.

The goal of the *Build Today Lead Tomorrow* 10-year strategy is "to strengthen the ACCHRTO sector's capacity and capability to meet the ACCHO sector's current and future workforce training needs" (NACCHO 2024 p. 25). It has multiple actions organised under five key themes: governance, partnership and engagement, capability, program delivery, and sustainability.

As of mid-2025, 12 ACCHRTOs are registered and operating, with 11 being Members of NACCHO as they are based in NACCHO Affiliates or Members. At their high point in 2011, there were 15 ACCHRTOs affiliated with NACCHO and another non-Member – 16 in total (*beyond…* 2011, p. 6). While better than the current situation, this was still inadequate to meet workforce needs. At that time, these ACCHRTOs were affiliated through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health RTO National Network or ATSIHRTONN, initially established in 2007 as an ACCH sector initiative and funded by the then Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

From 2007 to when it was defunded in 2015, ATSIHRTONN undertook significant pieces of collective work for the benefit of member RTOs and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce, both within and beyond the ACCH sector. Areas covered included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health worker qualifications, teaching and learning resources, and workforce and education needs analysis (ATSIHRTONN 2009; ATSIHRTONN and *beyond…* 2013; *beyond…* 2008, 2011).

The NACCHO Workforce and Training team is currently working with the ACCH sector to rebuild ACCHRTOs from their previous high point in 2011 using a collaborative approach that is driven by the *Build Today Lead Tomorrow* 10-year strategy (NACCHO 2024). A national ACCHRTO Community of Practice has been created –a contemporary version of ATSIHRTONN. Together, NACCHO and the ACCHRTO Community of Practice are:

- developing national AHW and AHP training resources based on a gap analysis of how current resources reflect the recently revised AHW and AHP training package
- developing Integrated Care (Aged Care & Disability) and Diabetes training resources
- developing new recognition of prior learning (RPL) toolkits for identified groups or clusters of units of competency that enable effective entry points into AHW and AHP career pathways
- collaborating on the design and implementation of the TAEDP.

2: The TAEDP evaluation

NACCHO commissioned an external evaluation of the TAEDP that would be inclusive of as well as extend on the existing monitoring work of the NACCHO Workforce and Training team through a co-design then ongoing collaborative process.

2.1 Evaluation design and process

The TAEDP evaluation journey commenced in July 2024, following the main steps in Figure 1 over the next 12 months. It was grounded in a collaborative approach between the external monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team and NACCHO TAEDP team, which includes members of the wider NACCHO Workforce and Training team.

Figure 1: TAEDP evaluation design and process



An initial co-design workshop was held with the NACCHO TAEDP Team in July 2024 that focused on both the FNHWTP and TAEDP to develop a draft program logic and begin identifying the likely evaluation participants. This was further developed and refined through a workshop with the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group that was overseeing both the FNHWTP and TAEDP evaluations. This workshop generated a deeper understanding of what would and could be explored, whose voices and experiences needed to be represented (i.e. evaluation participants), how this would occur, and the division of internal (monitoring) and external (evaluation) activities.

The agreed stakeholders who were invited to participate in the evaluation included: TAE students from all four study cohorts, the students' current employers (both ACCHOs and ACCHRTOs), the three host RTOs and the delivery RTO, and NACCHO TAEDP program staff. The M&E team were personally introduced to the delivery and host RTOs and students in each cohort by NACCHO staff. Personalised emails were sent to student employers and host RTOs inviting them to engage with the M&E team. Everyone received an information sheet and consent form to confirm they were comfortable to participate.

Where possible, participant voices and experiences were gathered through more than one evaluation activity or method to provide a richer story, as well as enable a detailed assessment of project processes and achievements to date. This was documented in the TAEDP monitoring and evaluation plan, and tools were created to support the agreed evaluation activities.

Once all evaluation activities were complete and initial analysis undertaken, a sense-making workshop was held with the NACCHO TAEDP team to jointly interrogate and interpret the emerging findings before final analysis and reporting.

2.2 What topics were explored?

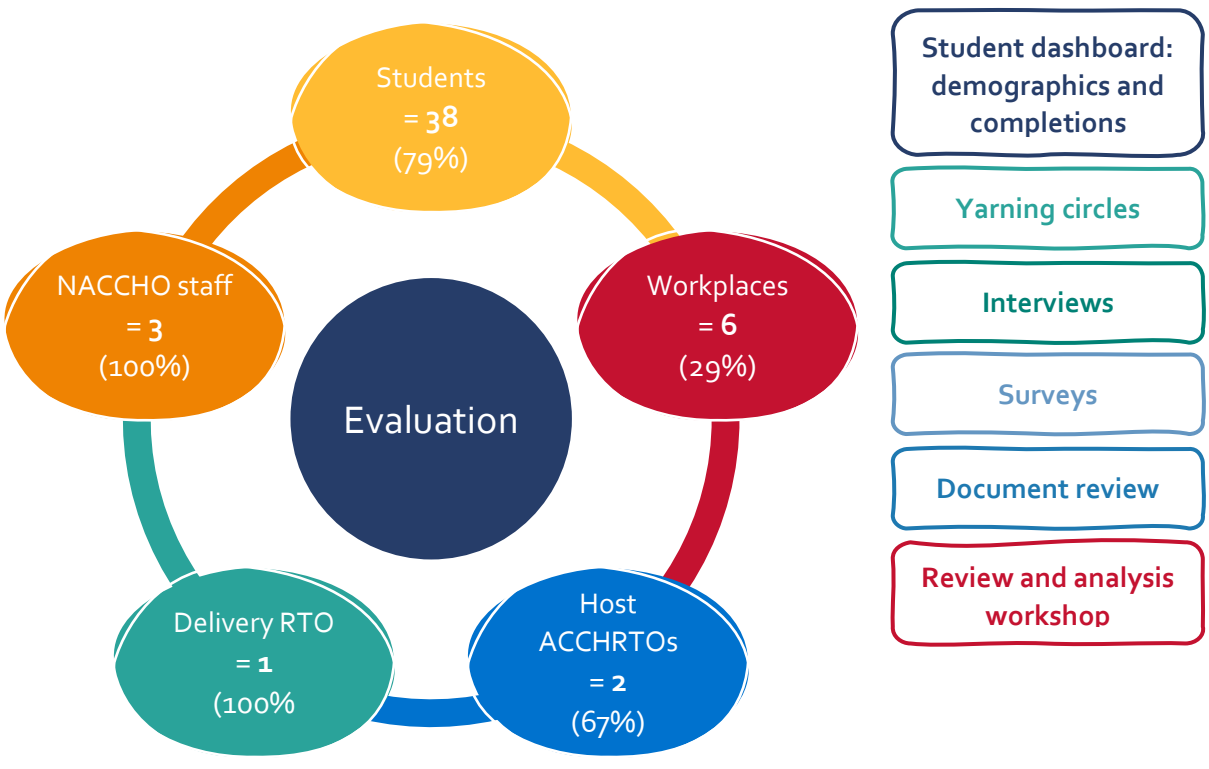
The four core topic areas depicted below were explored during external evaluation activities. Host RTOs and students' current workplaces were asked to explore all topics, while students and the delivery RTO explored all topics except for *employer experiences*. The yarning circle and conversation guides for each of the evaluation participant groups are provided in Appendix C.



2.3 Who was represented in the evaluation and how?

The five evaluation participant groups are shown in Figure 2. Each group, the number participating and what percentage they represent from that group (in brackets) is on the left-hand side.

Figure 2: Evaluation activities, participants and representation



The range of evaluation activities conducted are listed on the right side of Figure 2. They were:

- onsite yarning circles with students at the end of the last of their four blocks, RTO feedback forms (surveys) at the end of each block, and the student demographics and completions dashboard
- interviews with host ACCRTOs, the delivery RTO and workplaces
- interviews and a review and analysis workshop with NACCHO staff (the sense-making workshop), and a review of relevant program documents.

It is important to note that participation in the evaluation was voluntary, as an ethical and cultural safety requirement. While a very high proportion of students participated, some chose not to do so because they wanted to focus on completing assessment tasks or for personal or cultural safety reasons.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of all participating students on both a jurisdictional and geographical basis. The geographical or remoteness representation uses the 2019 Modified Monash Model (MMM), where MMM1 refers to a metropolitan area through to MMM7 a very remote community.[1]

Figure 3: Representation of students in the evaluation by jurisdiction and geographical location (n = 38)

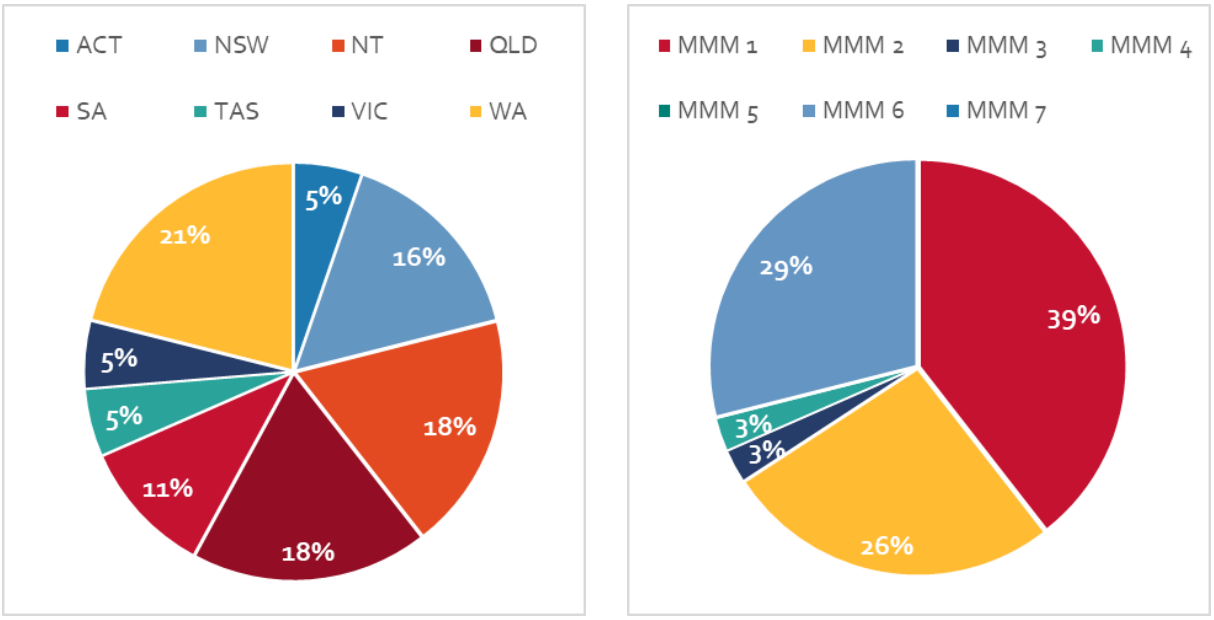
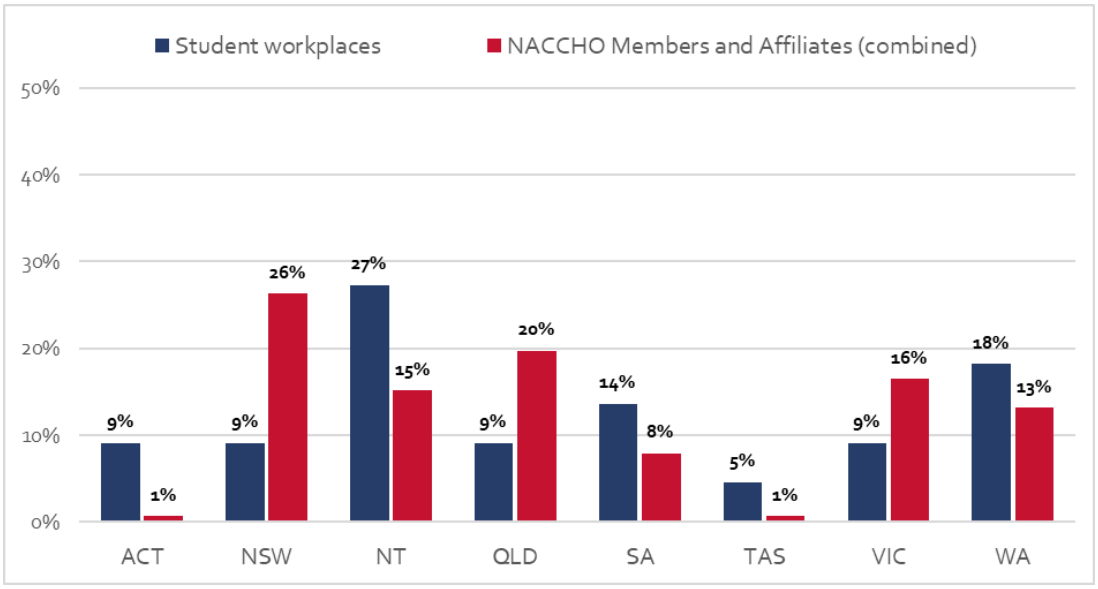


Figure 4 compares the jurisdictional distribution of student workplaces with NACCHO Members and Affiliates (combined), given that there is a need for qualified trainers and assessors across Australia. There was respresentation from all jurisdictions, however, with such a small cohort of students, this comparison must be treated cautiously. The most notable feature is the high take-up of the TAE in the Northern Territory, compared to NACCHO Member and Affiliate numbers, with an equally low take-up comparatively in New South Wales. This may reflect that there is no ACCRTO in the Northern Territory, with only one viable RTO option in the top end and none in central Australia. While there is

[1] See: <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/rural-health-workforce/classifications/mmm>.

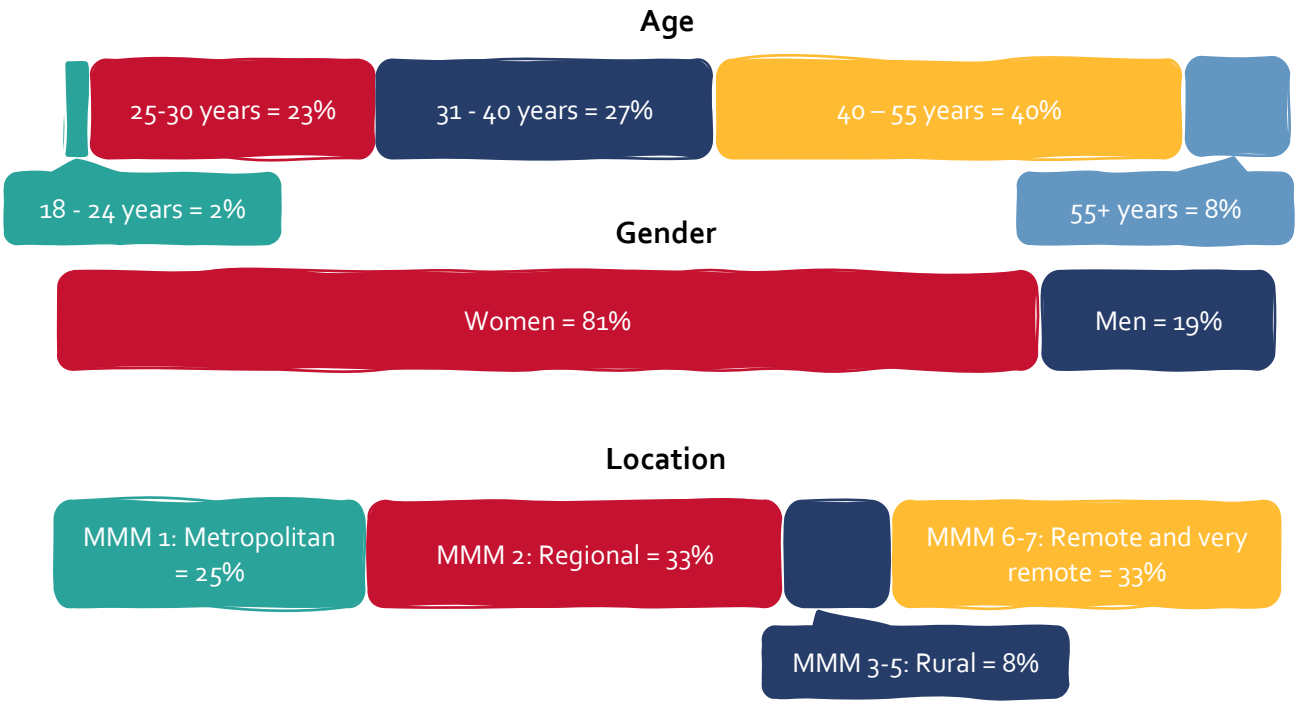
no ACCRTO in Queensland either, ACCHOs in this state have created partnerships with other RTOs so support trainng delivery to their staff and community members. Worklaces in Western Australia, especially in remote locations, have also been keen; the ACT reflects involvement of national organisations.

Figure 4: Jurisdictional distribution of workplaces compared with NACCHO Members (n = 21)



Diversity was evident based on age, gender and geographical location, as demonstrated in Figure 5, and the existing qualifications of staff who enrolled, which ranged from being an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker or Practitioner through to having a Masters of Secondary Education.

Figure 5: Diversity of age, gender and geographical location for staff enrolled in the TAE (n = 47)



2.4 Limitations

WORKPLACE REPRESENTATION

The 38 participating students reflected 21 workplaces across the ACCHO sector. Including a higher proportion of workplaces would have been preferable, e.g. 70-75%, to learn how the TAEDP was making a difference to them, as well as the capability and capacity of ACCHRTOs for meeting ACCHO current and future training needs. A combination of limited evaluation resources and the timeframe contributed to this not being achievable. Cohort 3 and 4 students finished in mid-June and early July 2025, while the required submission timing for the evaluation report was late July 2025. While a small allocation was allowed by the funder for the evaluation, it was insufficient to support the preferred methodology of onsite visits for yarning circles with students in their final block. NACCHO resolved this in part by supplementing the evaluation budget to cover all evaluation related travel costs.

NUMBER OF STUDENT FEEDBACK FORMS TO THE DELIVERY RTO

All students in the four cohorts were asked to submit a feedback form to the delivery RTO for each of their four blocks. This data is used in Section 3.1, representing ~30% of potential feedback forms if all student submitted one for every block. The yarning circle outcomes represent a high proportion of students, so the level of consistency suggests it is likely to be a good indication of the experience of many students.

STUDENT CAREER JOURNEY TRACKING

In any workforce development initiative, longer-term follow-up of its impact is wise to determine whether the enhanced knowledge and skills are retained within the contexts they are most needed: in this case, ACCRTOs and ACCHOs. The currently available evaluation resources and timeframe prevented this from occurring, despite NACCHO's strong interest in undertaking two or more years of career journey tracking. However, the evaluation was designed so it is technically possible to undertake student career journey tracking over the longer-term with students who have consented to this (89.5%). If resources are made available in future, this could occur. NACCHO could undertake this themselves with M&E team support or it could be undertaken by the M&E team.

3: Outcomes

This section describes the outcomes of the TAEDP evaluation; specifically, how well strategies have been implemented, the degree to which it has achieved its objective, according to its impact indicator, and recommendations for the future. To provide an interconnected understanding of the evaluation outcomes, the four key topic areas explored with evaluation participants are clustered as follows:



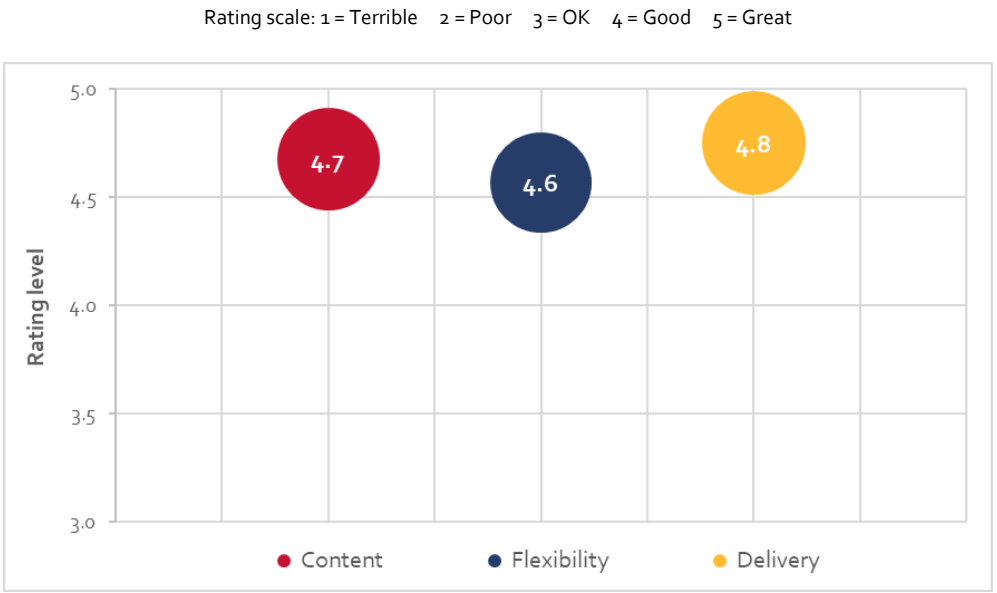
3.1 The training experience

Students shared their experience of the TAE training content, flexibility and delivery, identifying what they valued as well as areas that could be improved in future delivery of the TAE in the ACCH sector.

What did students value?

Students shared stories of and reflections on their training experience during yarning circles, and rated the course content, flexibility and delivery on the 5-point Likert Scale shown above the graph in Figure 6. Each point on the scale was allocated a value to generate an 'average score' out of five. As shown by the three average figures in Figure 5, all three aspects of the course were rated very highly across the cohorts. In fact, over 97% of the students selected 'good' or 'great' for course content and flexibility, with 95% doing the same for course delivery.

Figure 6: Student ratings for the quality of course content, flexibility and delivery (n = 37)

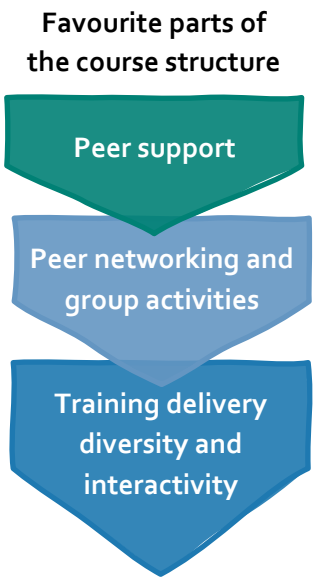


Three consistent features emerged for what students valued about their training experience: 1) it was a *well-structured course*; 2) with an *outstanding trainer* who was experienced, responsive and as open to personal learning as he was to being a facilitator of their learning; 3) in a *culturally safe* environment.

WELL-STRUCTURED COURSE

Overall, students were extremely happy with how the training was structured and delivered. The condensed (5-6 months), block training nature of the course was a highlight, as it allowed students to completely focus on their training during blocks and be free from other obligations. One student explained that it allowed her "*to be a student at the blocks and a Mum at home*" (TAE student).

Similarly, students appreciated how the content was structured so they had an opportunity to receive a Statement of Attainment at the end of each block, which represented a 'skill set' that had currency in the VET sector. Therefore, if they withdrew from the course, they would still gain one or more Statements of Attainment – see Appendix D.



Students valued how the assessments were organised and streamlined to minimise repetition, as well as being embedded into training blocks wherever possible. This made it "*more achievable and less overwhelming*" (TAE student). Face-to-face delivery and visiting other ACCRTOs was also beneficial to their learning experience, as they were immersed in their potential future workplaces.

In the student feedback forms, the favourite parts of course structure highlighted were peer support, networking and group activities, and the diversity and interactivity of training delivery.

OUTSTANDING TRAINER

Students across all blocks and cohorts were immediately forthcoming with high praise for the trainer. They described how he adapted the training content and his delivery to enable students to succeed in their own way by utilising their strengths, and supporting them to own their knowledge, skills and achievements. Examples of this include:

- encouraging students to use other presentation methods rather than PowerPoint
- implementing both online and hard copies of files to accommodate different learning styles
- not giving students answers but helping them to work it out themselves.

> *"I was quite hesitant going in, but now I have the skill of session planning. I implement it at work and feel more confident. I couldn't see myself as a facilitator, didn't have big voice – but [the trainer] showed me how to run it using my own personality and strengths." (TAE student)*

The trainer was described as "*very receptive to each person's needs and where we were at*" (TAE student); he "*really connected with who we are and how we learn*" (TAE student). He tried different teaching approaches for each student until they understood and felt confident with the content.

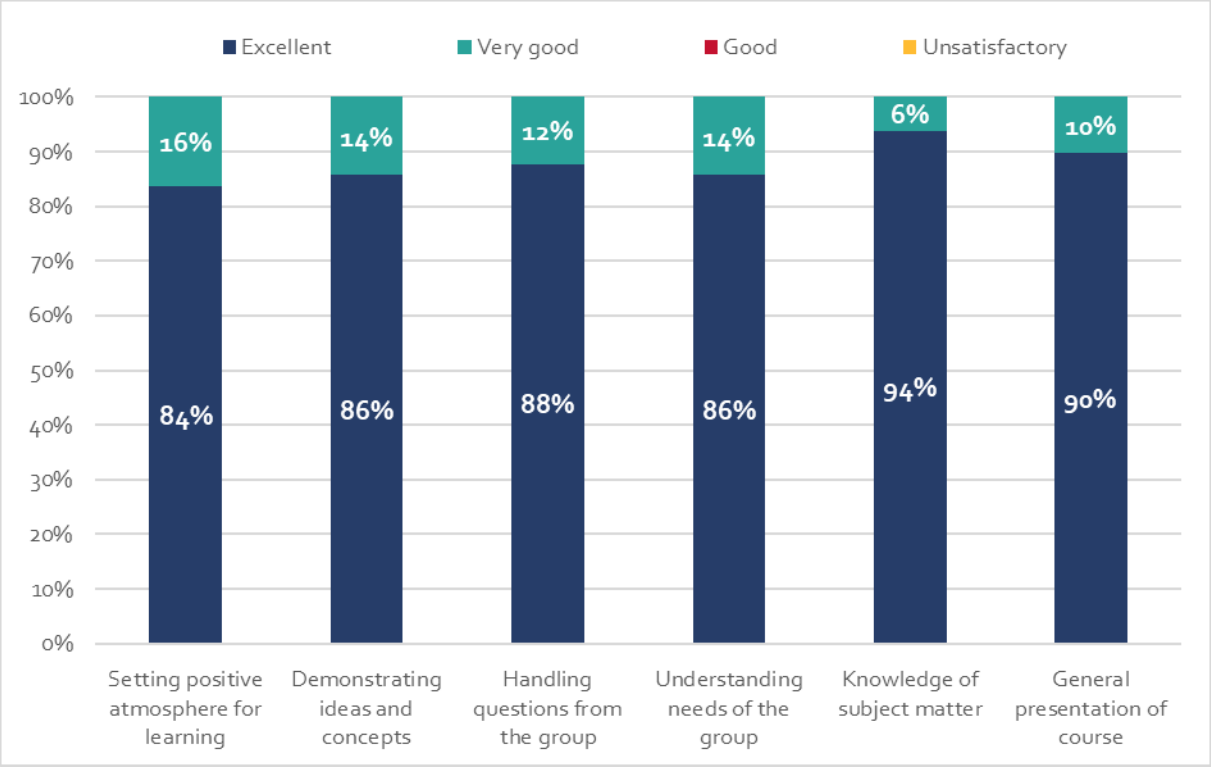
Many students commented on how well the trainer modelled the facilitation style he was teaching: for example, "*he teaches you about teaching while he's teaching you*" (TAE student). By delivering this way, students felt they were better prepared and confident to enter the training workforce. Students

regularly described how they were already implementing tips and tricks he had taught them if they were currently or now in training roles, such as fresh icebreaker activities.

Another key feature of the trainer's skillset was his deep knowledge of the course content and his commitment to the students. Students explained how on one block, he could not travel due to a weather event, so taught online from memory with no resources in front of him. His passion for the ACCH sector and for each student was repeatedly evident during the yarning circle conversations.

The yarning circle themes are supported by student feedback form outcomes. All who submitted a form rated all aspects of the course, trainer and delivery at either 'very good' or 'excellent' on the 4-point scale shown in the Figure 7 graph, regardless of which blocks they were in. Additionally, every student confirmed the course met their expectations. Several specifically commented that having a knowledgeable and skilled trainer was one of their favourite parts of the course experience.

Figure 7: Outcomes from student feedback forms on the training experience (n = 49)



CULTURAL SAFETY

A key intention for the course that was built into the project strategies was that it would be culturally safe (see Appendix B). Wherever possible, having entire cohorts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people ensured the training was more likely to be a safe space, which was possible in two of the four cohorts. This contrasted with non-Indigenous training environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are often isolated and have experienced racism, leading to lower completion and retention rates.

> *"One of the most important parts of the TAE qualification is it has been developed for mob, culturally safe, tailored to our socioeconomic disadvantages. It's a safe and cohesive environment*

> *and that has helped with retention rates compared to other mainstream environments where we experience racism." (TAE student)*

Students expressed that when students from previous cohorts had to rejoin later ones, they were "*here with open arms*", as they started from shared cultural understanding and ways of working.

Although neither the trainer nor delivery RTO were Indigenous, students reported that they felt culturally safe almost all the time. They explained how the trainer was always curious and willing to learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures – for example:

> *"We secretly think he's black! He's always been interested in discussing our culture – it's so vast and different, but he's tapped into that and been keen to use that. He made us feel safe and secure. He admits when he's wrong too. He makes a big difference. He's not just interested in the superficial stuff – he genuinely listens to the barriers and systemic oppression, and he asks questions. He wants to hear and understand and empathise. He's respectfully curious. He talks about his growth of cultural safety too. He's not coming in with a white saviour complex. He's so genuine." (TAE student)*

Moreover, he genuinely listened to students and implemented changes to the course wherever possible to strengthen cultural safety. For example, in early blocks of Cohort 2, no Welcome to Country was performed. After a student pointed this out, the trainer ensured there was a Welcome at the next block, as well as writing a Welcome to Country policy for his organisation to embed this change.

Similarly, he did his best to translate the dominant culture TAE training package and contextualise the content into students' current and future work roles. This is a stark difference from experiences at other public and private RTO providers, which students described as "*difficult to navigate and not culturally safe or relevant*" (TAE student). While some content in this course could not be changed, students experienced the trainer as being as flexible as possible to make the course interesting and relatable.

What improvements did students suggest?

While students felt culturally safe and well supported most of the time, collectively four proposed improvements were identified to strengthen cultural safety and other course structures in future.

An Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander trainer was proposed as ideal, as it would provide stronger modelling of the trainer experience using relevant and personal examples. This would expand on the fantastic support provided by NACCHO through their Aboriginal staff, one of whom was always present for each training block for every cohort (see Section 3.2).

On-country training options is a solution that could strengthen both cultural safety and address practical matters, such as long travel times to attend blocks, being away from family and community, and ensuring family and community obligations can be more easily met.

Eligibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students only was also mentioned as ideal. Two cohorts had one or two non-Aboriginal students as part of their group. Only in one group was this described as uncomfortable by both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the non-Indigenous student. Some of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students felt this was also unfair, as one explained: "*there's opportunities for everyone for training, but not always for Aboriginal people*" (TAE student).

Increasing the course length was also raised. While most students enjoyed the condensed training over a five to six month period, some preferred scheduling the four blocks over a slightly longer overall timeframe to create longer breaks between blocks. In addition, other students suggested Block 3 could benefit from being split up into two weeks due to its heavy content. Increasing the overall course length would "*especially help with travel time, energy levels, and community obligations*" (TAE student), as at least a few people fell behind in each cohort due to reasons related to these matters.

3.2 Student support strategies

Strategies to support good student experiences and outcomes were available from three sources: the delivery RTO, NACCHO as the program coordinator and workplaces. The different types of support strategies for each source are listed in Figure 8. Most students were aware of the available supports, except for a few in Cohort 1.

Figure 8: Range of student learning and wraparound supports available in the TAEDP



Learning supports from the delivery RTO

Students were asked to identify if they had accessed learning supports from the delivery RTO; if they had, they were invited to share their experience as well as rate them on the 5-point Likert Scale shown above the graph in Figure 9. The reason that students did not access one or more of the learning supports was because they considered they were already skilled in those areas or did not need them.

As shown in Figure 9, when students did access the learning supports, they rated them highly. Ratings did not drop below 'OK' for any of the learning supports, with over 92% of students selecting ratings of 'good' or 'great'. Three main themes emerged from their descriptions of utilising the learnings supports: being flexible and always available, targeting support to student needs, and extending above and beyond support from other public and private RTO providers.

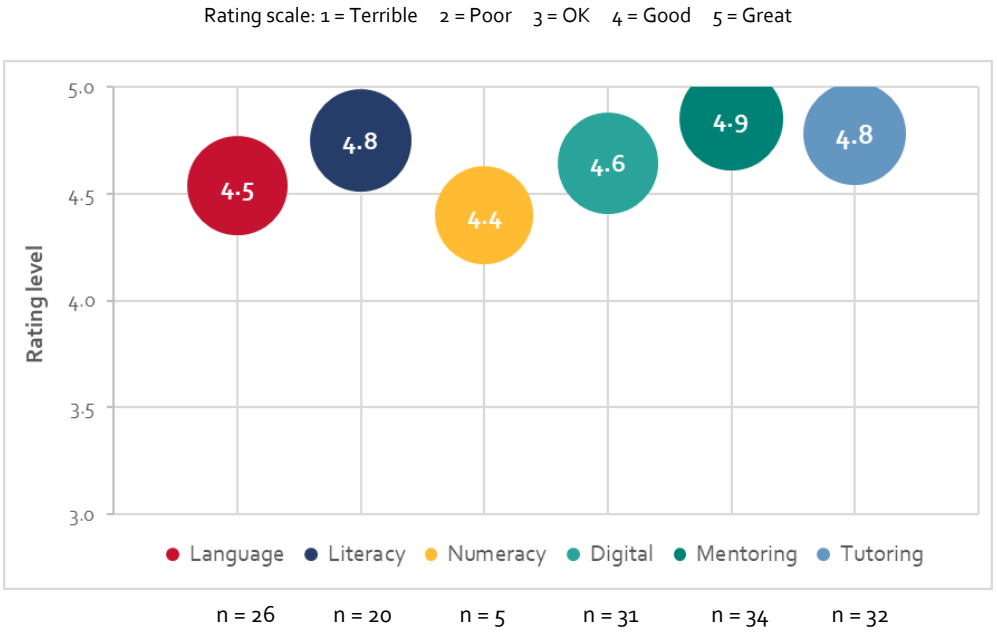
FLEXIBLE AND ALWAYS AVAILABLE

Students praised the clear and timely communication from the delivery RTO and the trainer's high level of availability to provide learning support. They noted how the trainer would come in early or stay late after blocks, which extended on the regular allocated one-one-one catch-up times already for individual student support. The trainer responded quickly, even outside of blocks, had an answer for every question and if he was going to be unavailable, let students know ahead of time. For example:

"The availability of [the trainer] was second to none. The response time was great." (TAE student)

"Probably the only trainer (uni, TAF E, anywhere) who can answer things immediately – incredible knowledge." (TAE student)

Figure 9: Student ratings of their experience of learning supports from the delivery RTO



TARGETING SUPPORT TO STUDENT NEEDS

Students noted how support was customised or targeted to student needs. For example, the trainer skilfully translated RTO jargon into straight talk or easy to understand terms. When works were "*broken down and explained*" (TAE student), he made them relevant to their experience and contexts.

Digital support was called out by the students who liked the training organisation's online platform; some were keen to replicate it in their own training environments. They noted how the trainer helped those with low digital literacy to gain confidence and improve their online skills.

EXTENDING ABOVE AND BEYOND MAINSTREAM TRAINING SUPPORT

Many students had previously undertaken training with other public and private RTO providers; they reported that this course far exceeded their previous experiences. They valued having the consistency of the same trainer for all four training blocks, as this built trust and relationships and improved cultural safety. This enhanced the comprehensive wraparound support they experienced (see below) and facilitated completion of assessment tasks as a cohort rather than just individually. Overall, the trainer "*bent over backwards for us if we needed support*" (TAE student) and "*nothing has been too much to ask for*" (TAE student). Critique was rare; for example, sometimes information overload occurred if the trainer did not give concise answers to students' questions.

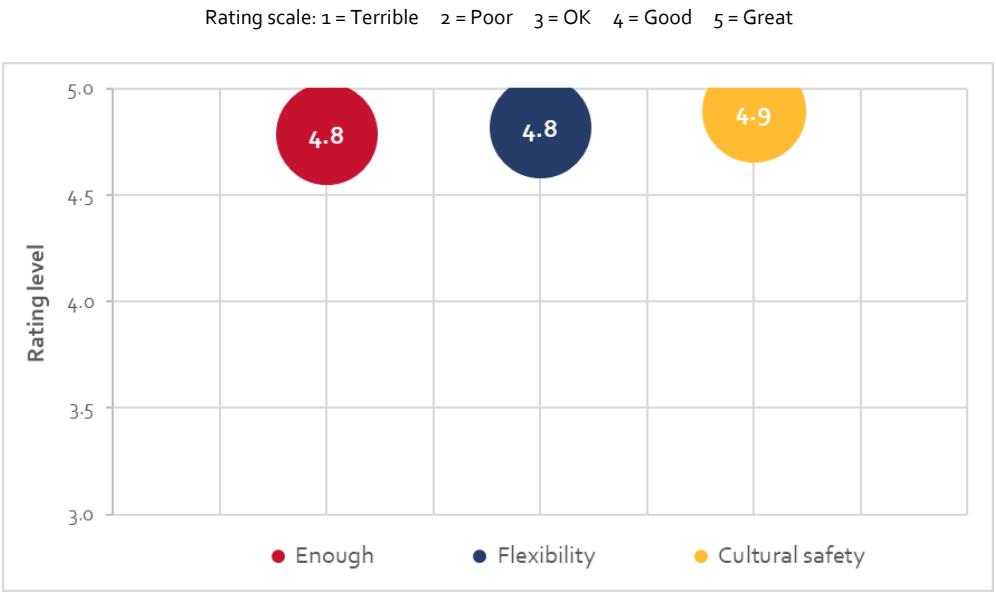
Wraparound supports

Students were asked about their experience of wraparound supports from the delivery RTO, NACCHO and their workplaces. NACCHO provided most support in preparation for, on, and after each block.

WRAPAROUND SUPPORT FROM THE DELIVERY RTO

Consistently high ratings were given by students when assessing whether the wraparound support they experienced from the delivery RTO was enough, flexible and culturally safe, with over 95% selecting ratings of 'good' or 'great'. This is evident in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Student ratings of their experience of delivery RTO wraparound support (n = 37)



Without exception, students felt truly cared for by the trainer and supported every step of the way to succeed. They valued his genuine passion and investment in their training, and his relatable nature. They noted that although he had a very busy life, his commitment to them shone through:

> *"[The trainer] is such an ally, genuinely at his core. He explains he's a family man, kids and wife, just like everybody else. The examples he gave really showcased that. It wasn't just demonstrated through words, but through actions too. Even with his own personal things, he always considers the students first. Everyone's treated as equal. He's a good mentor and tutor." (TAE student)*

Even when Sorry Business happened, students explained that he helped them finish by letting them revisit content at a later point whenever they were ready, with no ultimatums. He sat down with them to map out their demanding work schedules to ensure they could complete all their training tasks.

> *"…as a person, the success of this is based on how [the trainer] delivers it, good relationships, trust. It's hard work but he has genuine passion and wants us to succeed. He's invested in it." (TAE student)*
>
> *"He's always there to help us across the line if needed. It's huge to know you're not just a dollar to him." (TAE student)*

WRAPAROUND SUPPORT FROM NACCHO

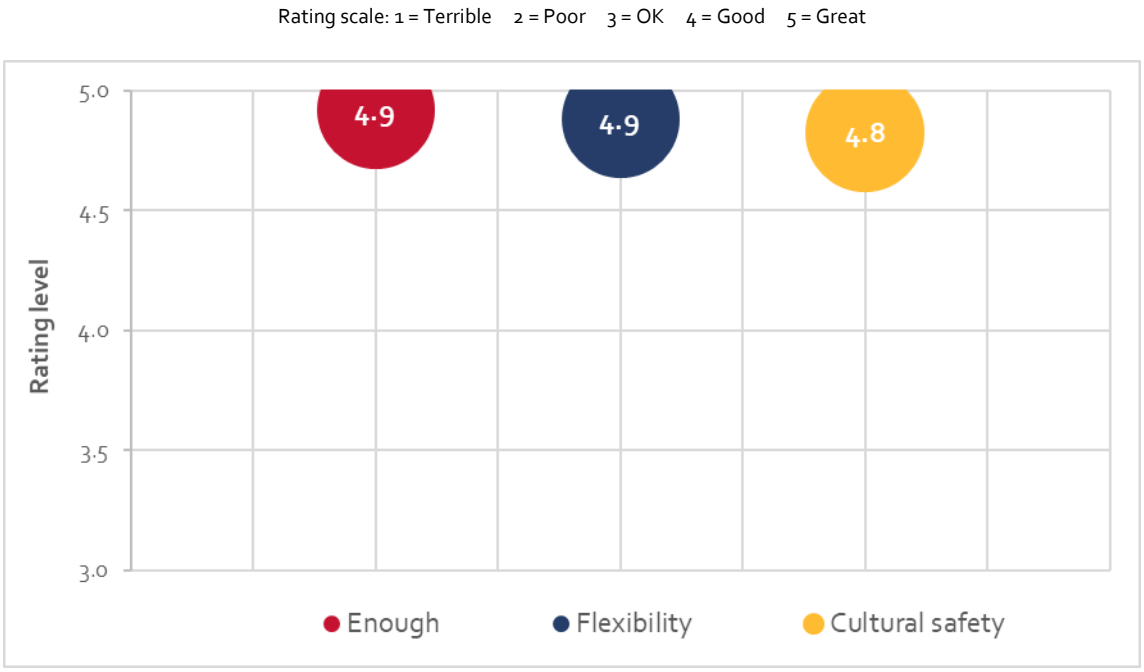
Three themes emerged to characterise the wraparound support from NACCHO: a strong relationship between MRWED and NACCHO, excellent communication and action, and unwavering care and support for students.

Strong relationship between MRWED and NACCHO

Many students highlighted how well the trainer worked with the NACCHO staff – so well that most talked about them as one support team rather than separate teams. This is evident in their ratings in Figure 11, which are like those given to MRWED. Over 96% selecting ratings of 'good' or 'great'. A student described the trainer and NACCHO staff as:

> *"They're like a big brother, big sister approach. We don't feel less than – we're all walking together." (TAE student)*

Figure 11: Student ratings for wraparound support from NACCHO



Another notable part of this relationship is how it contributed to cultural safety. Students commended NACCHO staff for complementing the trainer and providing both gender and cultural balance. Having someone with lived experience as an Aboriginal person was described as vital for students to feel safe.

Excellent communication and action

NACCHO staff responded quickly to students' questions and, due to their extensive VET knowledge, could provide detailed and deconstructed answers. Students valued the regular online check-ins organised by NACCHO, noting that NACCHO staff were available any time to talk. Emails and fortnightly cohort meetings hosted by NACCHO ensured that students knew what the next block was about and had completed their previous work. Students were clear about what was expected of them.

Additionally, NACCHO staff communicated regularly with students' workplaces to ensure they were getting the support they needed and to sort out any issues. Students also liked that they had the same

contact person at NACCHO throughout their course and how NACCHO took on feedback well and implemented change as quickly as possible in response to it.

Unwavering care and support

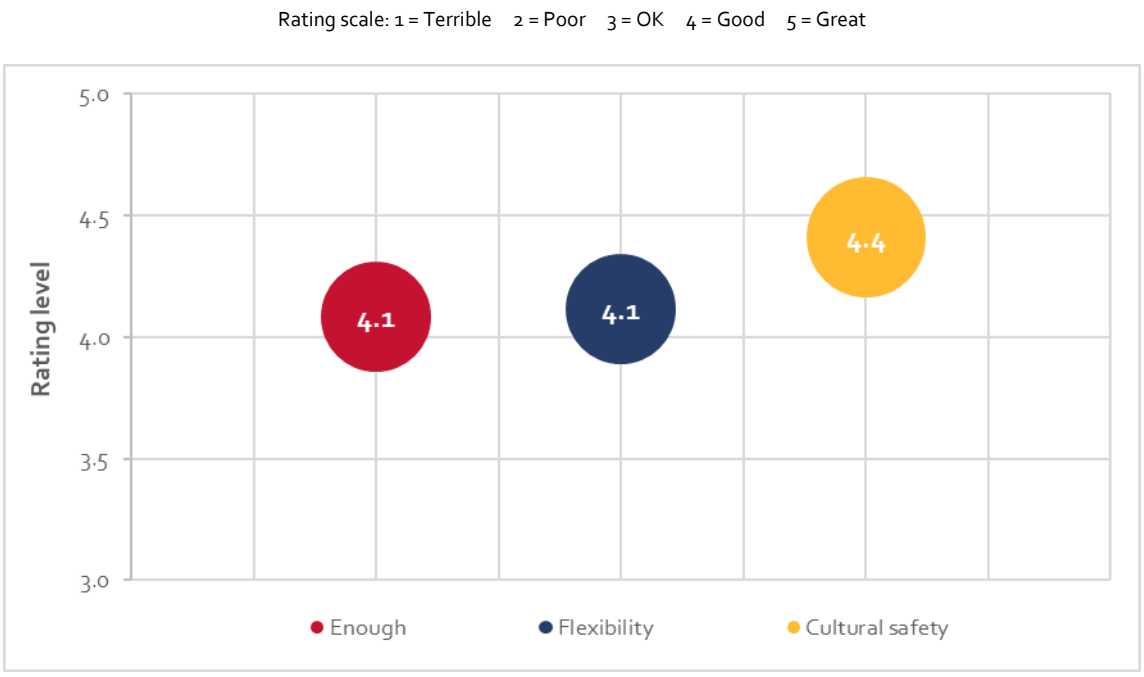
Most students emphasised how "*this program would not have been so successful without [NACCHO staff]*" (TAE student). The commitment to students' wellbeing was invaluable and many felt they would not have finished the course without this support. Every small detail was taken care of, like buying coffees, picking up students from their hotel and driving them to the training venue or airport, providing lunch, recommending hotels and travel plans, and printing off resources or assignments. Nothing was questioned and nothing was too much trouble. Students felt genuinely valued, cared for and encouraged to finish every step of the way. This enabled students to turn their full attention to their training:

> *"She's a calming person in the background - can you print this and sit beside me and support - so you can just focus on your learning and not on the stuff in the background and not run around. It gives you a sense of calm, it's under control from someone else so you can bury your brain in the learning, a much deeper sense of learning." (TAE student)*
>
> *"We're not a student ID. We're a person. She goes above and beyond." (TAE student)*

WRAPAROUND SUPPORT FROM THEIR WORKPLACE

Students rated their workplace support slightly lower, although at 'good' or above on average, see Figure 12. Over 69% selected ratings of 'good' or 'great' for wraparound support being *enough* and *flexible*, and over 82% selected 'good' or 'great' for *cultural safety*. Their workplaces were not directly funded by the TAEDP to provide support, whereas the delivery RTO and NACCHO were, however they were expected to provide support as a condition of participation in the project.

Figure 12: Student ratings for wraparound support from their workplace



Things that worked well

Students expressed their gratitude that NACCHO funded their travel, rather than their workplaces, as this meant workplaces were more likely to commit to their training.

Workplaces that supported students well were invested in their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and committed to supporting their students in an unrestricted and culturally safe manner. Some students were asked by their workplaces to complete the TAE. These students explained their workplace valued efforts to strengthen the workforce pipeline, provide opportunities for community members to seek careers in health and understood what their training involved. They received time off work or paid study leave to complete training tasks, had regular check-ins with their managers or mentors, and received extended deadlines for work tasks when needed.

A standout workplace supported this student as a single mother:

> *"My son comes on every trip and my organisation supports that. I pay for my son, but work lets me pick what flights etc. They're a family inclusive organisation. Having my son here hasn't impacted my training because they've been so supportive. But I wish it was like that for everyone – I shouldn't be lucky!" (TAE student)*

Things that did not work well

A few students had unpleasant experiences with their workplace support. This was often due to workplaces not providing study leave, expecting work tasks to take priority or not backfilling students' roles while they were away. Other times, the nature of students' roles meant they could not fully switch off for the training week as they still needed to complete work tasks.

Another concern arose around travel bookings, particularly for some students in earlier cohorts. They found it stressful to pay costs before receiving reimbursement from their workplace, as this created financial pressure. Another stressful situation occurred when workplaces did not follow NACCHO's suggestions for preferred hotels or flights, resulting in isolating and frustrating experiences for some students who found themselves at a distance from the RTO and their fellow students. Students suggested these issues may be caused by workplaces having a limited understanding of what the training involves and possibly, limited understanding of cultural safety.

Suggestions for improvement

There were two major suggestions for improvement:

- **NACCHO to book travel:** In addition to funding travel, students believed that NACCHO should centrally coordinate travel. This would alleviate reimbursement worries, ensure all students stay together for cultural safety reasons, and make it easier to get to training venues and other cohort activities.
- **NACCHO to establish an agreement or contract with workplaces:** If NACCHO asked workplace to sign an agreement or contract, this would strengthen accountability for the workplace to provide appropriate support to students, including resources such as laptops, sufficient paid time to complete assessment tasks, and clearer understanding of training content and requirements.

Another suggestion was specific to Cohort 4 but may be relevant in the future. Students want blocks to be scheduled in "*quieter*" weeks wherever possible. As having a fourth cohort was not in initial plans, this placed pressure on timing to fit it within the overall TAEDP timeframe, resulting in the less favourable option of needing to schedule the last block in NAIDOC Week.

3.3 Employer and RTO experiences

Employer experiences

INVOLVEMENT AS AN EMPLOYER

Without exception, employers were keen to have their staff as students in the TAE; in fact, some would have enrolled more if it were possible. Their core reason was the opportunity to increase VET trainers and assessors and better equip staff as student support or supervisors. They reported that their Boards were often aware and supportive of staff involvement in the course.

When selecting people for the TAE, employers selected people with strong experience in their existing roles, which provides an excellent foundation for becoming effective trainers and assessors. They had felt more confident that this ACCH sector-led training experience would have better outcomes than those they had experienced with public or private RTOs, which overall had been poor. As they were interviewed towards the end of their staff study experience, they confirmed how the NACCHO model proved to be a clear contrast:

> *"We've tried to do TAE in the past in traditional approaches, but it hasn't worked. NACCHO's program is a better approach because traditional approaches you have to do a lot of the work yourself. Trying to keep someone engaged in the approach is really hard because the majority of the work you have to do off your own bat - whereas this one has intensives, but they get it done and [students] are well supported." (Employer #1)*

Employers also shared how the students had applied their learning. Students who already had training roles were improving how they were planning, designing and delivering training. Employers reported how the students were filling training gaps – sometimes at short notice – as well as mentoring trainees from the FNHWTP who were working in their organisation and establishing new training support systems within the organisation. For example:

> *"[Our staff member] loved doing the TAE and the skills she gained were perfect for the role. She spoke very highly of the training – nothing negative about it. She has embedded new systems and tools and templates at [our ACCHO] for trainees – competencies, supervisor plans and signoffs, etc. She's done a lot more work applying the TAE course into her role." (Employer #2)*

COURSE FLEXIBILITY

Employers also shared what they heard from their staff about the flexibility of the course, as well as what they experienced as an employer. Reports of very positive experiences were consistent, as well as feeling culturally safe with the trainer, as well as the NACCHO staff. They reported that flexibility was evident, particularly in terms of how students were supported when personal or cultural matters impacted their study.

> *"One student really doubted herself being able to complete the program. She couldn't believe it when she completed. The support and flexibility offered, they travel everywhere to do the program, and the trainer offers them so much support outside the program, it's outstanding. It's not hard like people say – you do it in a way that means you complete the work within the block so it's not hanging over your head." (Employer #3)*

The interviewed employers also noted how the trainer built assessment into the intensive study blocks wherever possible, which facilitated completion and reduced study time required when outside of their blocks, back in their organisation. Another appreciated feature was how NACCHO allowed for reimbursement of extra travel days for students in regional and remote locations who made long commutes to attend blocks.

WORKPLACE WRAPAROUND SUPPORT

Employers described the types of workplace wraparound support they believed they offered students. This included supporting staff:

- to attend blocks in work time
- to complete assessments within work time
- through direct mentoring and tutoring, in some instances provided in work time
- by ensuring they covered all travel costs (those in addition to NACCHO funding)
- by signing off on RPL to acknowledge previous study and minimise assessment.

For example:

> *"After blocks, I would help get students' heads around questions, give them resources for presentations and break down questions into easy terms. I've been explaining the TAE for years, it's long-winded and wordy." (Employer #1)*
>
> *"We made sure they were supported to attend, any costs, ensured they had taxi vouchers and travel allowance, paid while doing their training. We knew how important it was for us to have them skilled in those areas." (Employer #4)*

STUDENTS' EMPLOYMENT

All interviewed employers reported that the staff they supported to do the TAE were still employed with them or within the ACCH sector. Some had taken up a career opportunity within the ACCHO or another sector organisation. In all cases, the staff had gained enhanced skills to support both RTO and ACCHO-based training and assessment and ACCHO-based student support and supervision.

> *"[Student] has changed work role and went into another Manager high level position, but it was to give her capacity to deliver management and leadership training as part of that role, so she can support the business end of it with our managers - project management and leadership." (Employer #4)*
>
> *"She doesn't like to get up and speak but now she's done the training and might be delivering training, this will grow her confidence. Now they understand the training and assessment process, they can work a lot better with the students in the clinic." (Employer #1)*
>
> *"She was a trainer and assessor after finishing the course, but now she's gone back to her clinical work. She trains on a casual basis, but not full time anymore. It's a shame she didn't stay in the role because she has very strong skills and had the potential to progress in her career as a trainer and assessor." (Employer #6)*

Host RTO experiences

Two host RTOs were available to share their experience of the TAEDP. They spoke from two positions, as an employer (which is represented in the previous section) and as an RTO with an understanding of their current and future capability and capacity needs for being well positioned to train the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce.

Involvement as an RTO

The host RTOs verified that the high demand for places in the TAEDP matches the high need for more qualified trainers and assessors with relevant industry experience so ACCRTOs can respond to the broader training needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce, both within and beyond the ACCH sector. They valued how NACCHO had designed the TAEDP, which involved them as members of the national ACCHRTO Community of Practice, and the role they played. While they were not directly delivering the course, there were other benefits for them.

> *"NACCHO support – they always harass us (in a funny way) to get things ready for the students, to make it smooth for the students when they come. They're always following up with students and making sure they're on track – pastoral care kind of support, peer support." (Host RTO #1)*
>
> *"It's good the students go to different RTOs to find out how they operate, good experience for them to prepare them for the workplace." (Host RTO #1)*

Like the ACCHO employers, they also reported poor experiences with public and private RTO providers and believed the NACCHO model for the TAE provided a clear contrast:

> *"One student tried to do it through TAFE and it didn't go well. The model didn't work. It didn't align with her work, but through this approach she's smashing it and loves the trainer delivery style, [she is] highly engaged and does most assessments in class. It is such a more streamlined process." (Host RTO #1)*
>
> *"I have heard lots of fantastic things about how NACCHO have delivered the TAE – the facilitators are knowledgeable and patient." (Host RTO #2)*

Course flexibility

As fellow trainers and assessors, they reflected on the flexibility of the course and how it was delivered by MRWED. They described the course trainer delivery style as effective, culturally safe and high quality. They witnessed him being very flexible with students, supportive and were aware he was available outside of the intensive blocks for the students. They also noted and respected how he built assessments into intensive blocks, demonstrating good practice in course delivery.

Workplace wraparound support

While NACCHO had the most substantial role in providing wraparound support to students, followed by the delivery RTO, there were also expectations that host RTOs would contribute by supporting both the students and the delivery RTO while they were onsite. Host RTOs confirmed that they did provide support to students, utilising their RTO support staff, and sought to engage with students personally, as they view them as potential future RTO staff.

"Our wraparound support has been more to the delivery RTO so they can give the students a good experience. We just do wraparound support, little stuff. We give them our equipment to use for practical demonstrations as we're hosts. We have lunch with the students sometimes. They know they can ask us for stuff and we welcome them. Our house is your house. You might be coming back to teach for us in the future, so we want them to know what it's like to be here." (Host RTO #1)

STUDENTS' EMPLOYMENT

As they had a joint role as a host RTO and an employer, the host RTOs shared a blended employment experience of what had or is now occurring for students who were their staff. One host RTO retained employment of both of their staff once they were TAE graduates, but under a different arrangement through innovative industry-linked and ACCHO-based training delivery models. For example:

"One student is at [an AMS] and about to run a pilot program there as a satellite delivery location for training [with our RTO]. Their role is part of the pilot - figuring out what they get paid for. Usually, someone comes in and gets paid casually by the hour. However, we want them to be full time in the AMS and get $20k bonus for education – they're already doing it informally, but we want to formalise it and acknowledge their qualification. It's better financially for us too not having to find a salary for them. We want to pilot this in four locations to the end of the year." (Host RTO #1)

The other host RTO was disappointed to lose their staff member to a different career opportunity, although there was hope that they may reconnect with the RTO or contribute to training through other means in either the ACCH sector or other health organisations:

"[The student from our RTO] thoroughly enjoyed her experience and learned a lot. What the trainer delivered was very good quality – she was able to demonstrate fantastic skills and knowledge when assessing. She contributed a lot in course design at [our RTO]. Sometimes students complete the training but lack in-depth knowledge of the training package and interpreting it in terms of assessment tool design, usually trainers need 3-4 years working in the sector to develop these competencies, but she has been great and very good knowledge and great skills. She can translate and customise the package for the trainees – has very strong understanding." (Host RTO #2)

This host RTO was keen to have further staff involved in the program:

"I was going to put another 2 staff members into the program…but we might not have funding for it – which is very difficult. AHP is a very specialist skill and hard to recruit them because we're pulling them from their community. But they don't have a TAE, so they need to train so they can train more AHPs. It is an issue and hopefully something will come out of this program." (Host RTO #2)

Delivery RTO experiences

The MRWED trainer was invited to reflect on similar areas to the students, workplaces and host RTOs (see Appendix C).

COURSE FLEXIBILITY

The trainer believed that the flexibility of the course was a core feature – both how it was planned to operate and then what was addressed responsively along the way, for which it was difficult to plan, that involved both unexpected work and personal situations, including sorry business. The feedback he had received from students and NACCHO indicated that the flexibility shown was highly appreciated and at a level that was unexpected based on previous training experiences.

A key learning was the need for more dedicated and consistent support from the workplace, not just from the delivery RTO and NACCHO, as he noted the variations in workplace support. Notably, how students who left block with the most work to complete were not necessarily the ones who received solid workplace support. He proposed that in future:

> *"…I need to give enough class time to finish work, but I can't have those finished sitting around doing nothing. Part of the future planning would be having more time off from work for students. We really need workplaces to take them offline for another day [after each block] to give them support to finish their work….we need to emphasise this more." (Delivery RTO)*

SUPPORT STRATEGIES

A significant learning for the trainer was appreciating the range of challenges that this group of students can face, their impact and therefore the importance of support strategies; not just learning support, but personal, cultural and emotional support. He highlighted the critical role of student to student support – for example:

> *"The wraparound support from other students has been overwhelming. They go over and above what I'd expect a student to do for another student…the comradery and team the students have built with each other is amazing…This doesn't get factored into wraparound support [in VET] but it needs to be recognised. It's such a big thing." (Delivery RTO)*

For learning supports, he reported needing to focus on digital literacy more than expected, with less demand for language, literacy and numeracy. He indicated that this should not be assumed in future and would need to be considered in the student recruitment strategy.

He described this TAE course as a "*unique program*", with considerable learning along the way. The feedback from the first cohort of students assisted MRWED and NACCHO to adjust and prepare differently for the latter cohorts. One example was ensuring there was better communication with students, directly from the trainer, not just NACCHO. An area to strengthen further in the lead-in to any cohort was "*consulting with workplaces - they need to better understand how much support some students need*". He also believed that travel coordination should not be left with workplaces, but centralised and coordinated by NACCHO, as this would minimise students feeling isolated and uncomfortable with their accommodation, especially for students unfamiliar with being in cities.

Despite these areas for improvement, he reported that when students:

> *"…compared this program to other models, they are chalk and cheese with support, structure and flexibility. The overwhelming feedback we have had [from students] is that this program is a totally different structure and model for them." (Delivery RTO)*

Personally, he contrasted his experience with others courses he delivers. A standout was spending time and building relationships with the students, especially as a non-Indigenous person. He felt accepted and taken on his own journey of learning about cultural safety and how to deliver training effectively, often involving "*really robust conversations and growth for me*".

Another standout experience was witnessing the student journeys, shifting from having low levels of self-belief to achieving the qualification and at a high quality level, as well as going on to deliver training independently and staying in touch to share their experience. A further standout was the positive impact and change within MRWED as a business and staff team, as they have collectively learned and raised their consciousness of culture and cultural safety.

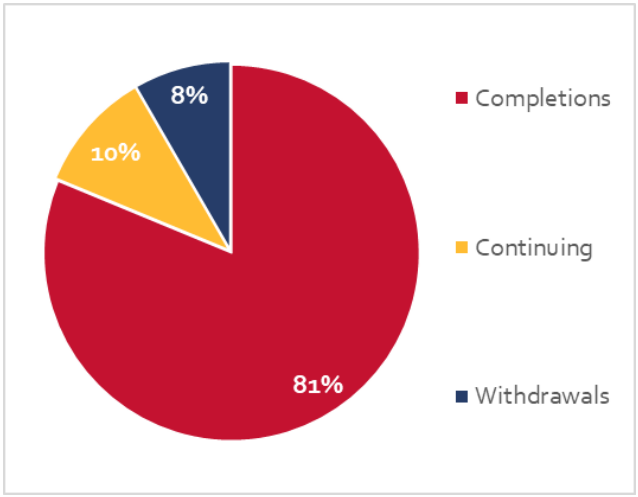
3.4 Student training and career journey outcomes

Student training outcomes

While a handful of students enrolled as a job requirement, most wanted the qualification for one or more of the following reasons:

- as professional upskilling
- to address trainer shortages in their workplace or the ACCH sector
- to train new trainees in the FNHWTP
- to help upskill their community.

Figure 13: Student training outcomes (n = 48)



A high proportion of students achieved their goal of completing the qualification. As of mid-July 2025, the completion rate was 81% representing 39 students. As shown in Figure 13, there are five students continuing (10%), so the potential overall completion rate is 92% as only four students withdrew. These five students have received Statement of Attainment for the skillsets they have completed.

As noted in Section 1.2, this outcome is substantially higher than TAE completion rates in public or other private providers, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and is consistent with the previous data on ACCHRTO completion rates.

Student career journey outcomes

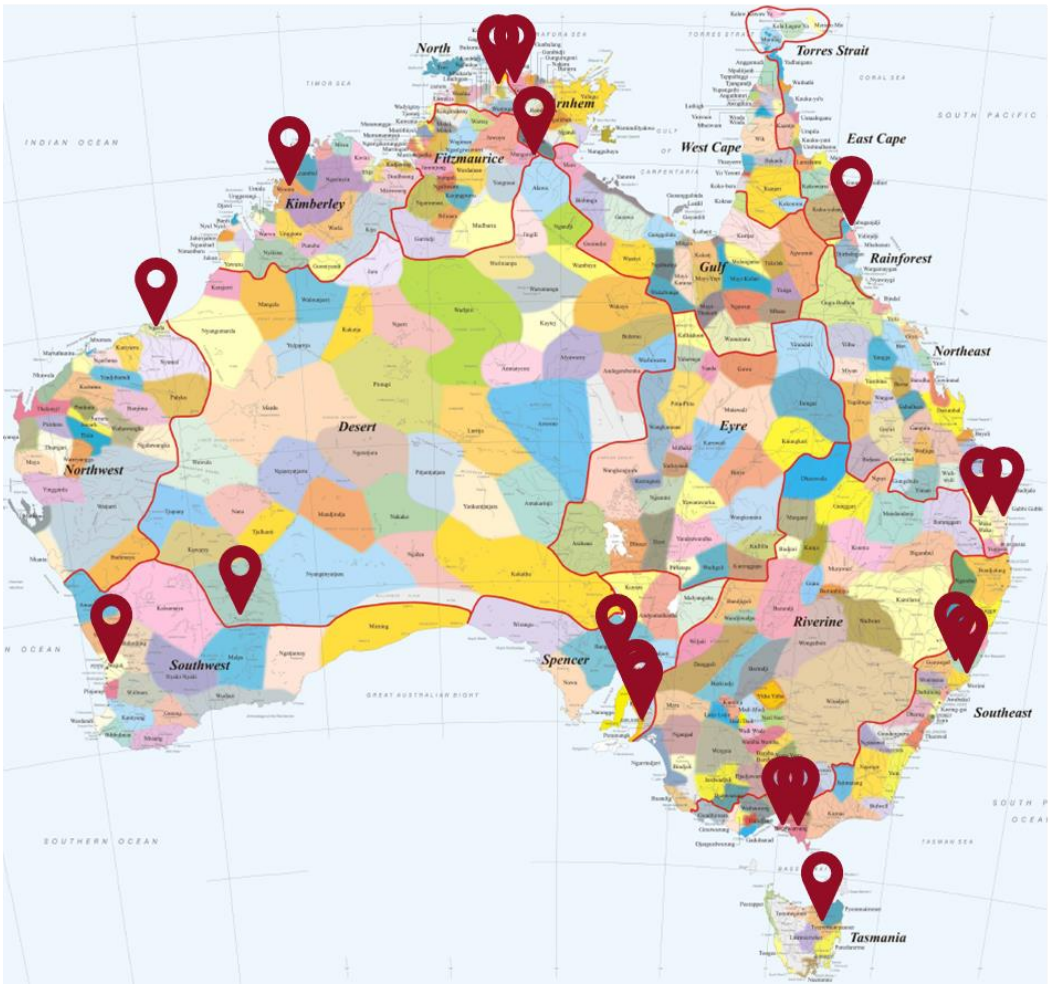
All students were invited to complete 'career journey tracking' worksheets as part of the evaluation; 35 of the 38 students (92%) participating in the evaluation did this at two or more of the three journey time points, illustrated in Figure 14. The 29 students (76%) who completed all three timepoints are included in the outcomes presented in this section.

Figure 14: Current timepoints for student career journey tracking



Students shared their actual and planned employment status for each timepoint, including the organisation within which they worked, and their current and desired role. Five main types of organisations were usually named: ACCRTOs, ACCHOs, ACCOs, ACC peak bodies (national or state) and non-ACC health. Figure 15 identifies the geographical starting workplaces/organisations for all students who enrolled in the TAE.

Figure 15: Student pre-course workplace locations (n = 48)



Student roles fell into seven different categories:

- VET training delivery
- Workforce development
- Clinical delivery, education, supervision and assessment

- Clinical delivery only
- Health promotion or public health programs
- Management and governance
- Social determinants of health.

The first three roles are VET-related. While VET training delivery is clearly VET-related, the workforce development roles were as well, although not focused on direct delivery. Workforce development coordinators and/or support staff provide support to VET students and trainees, and may also mentor, tutor and liaise with the RTO on their behalf, as well as provide advice on clinical supervision and placement assessments within ACCHOs. It is important to note that several of these roles were established as part of the FNHWTP that NACCHO is running simultaneously with the TAEDP, known as Student Support Managers, who are a key part of wraparound support for trainees who cannot attend ACCHRTOs. People in combined clinical delivery, education, supervision and assessment roles are regularly interacting with VET students, and their support can lead to good training outcomes.

In the TAEDP, student career journeys in terms of their roles are illustrated in Figure 16, as it shows whether and how much there was a change from pre-course to the end of the course, and what students were aspiring to do. By the end of the course, as students were completing their final assignments in Block 4, only minor change was evident. One student had shifted into a workforce development role. The 13 students who were already in a VET training delivery, workforce development or clinical delivery, education, supervision and assessment combined role remained in that role. This indicates that people who needed a TAE to be fully effective in their roles had been recruited and retained, while opportunities had emerged for a couple of other students who were interested in pursuing this direction.

However, the story was different for role aspirations, as 14 students wanted to move into direct VET training delivery and another into a clinical delivery, education, supervision and assessment combined role. The 13 who were already in VET training delivery, workforce development or clinical delivery, education, supervision and assessment combined roles wanted to sustain their work in these roles.

The graph in Figure 17 shows the actual and aspirational change in the organisations for whom students worked. Change was very limited by the end of the course but the aspiration to shift predominantly from an ACCHO or ACCO context into an ACCRTO was high. Nine or 31% of students wanted to do this, which is in addition to the four students already working in ACCRTOs. Those who wanted to stay within ACCHOs described staying in or moving into VET-related roles aligned with the descriptions above, i.e. workforce development or combined clinical delivery, education, supervision and assessment roles.

As noted in Section 2.4, it is not possible to do an annual follow-up of students for three or more years to see what changes occur within their career that align with their 'aspiration' position. This would be valuable for three reasons – to:

- determine both the longer-term and unexpected benefits of the program that workplaces are already anticipating
- fully assess the second component of the TAEDP objective
- set realistic benchmarks for transition of TAE trained ACCH sector staff into VET-related roles; this can inform future TAE training planning, while accounting for staff turnover in ACCRTOs.

Figure 16: Student career journeys - ROLES: pre-course, end of course and aspiration (n = 29)

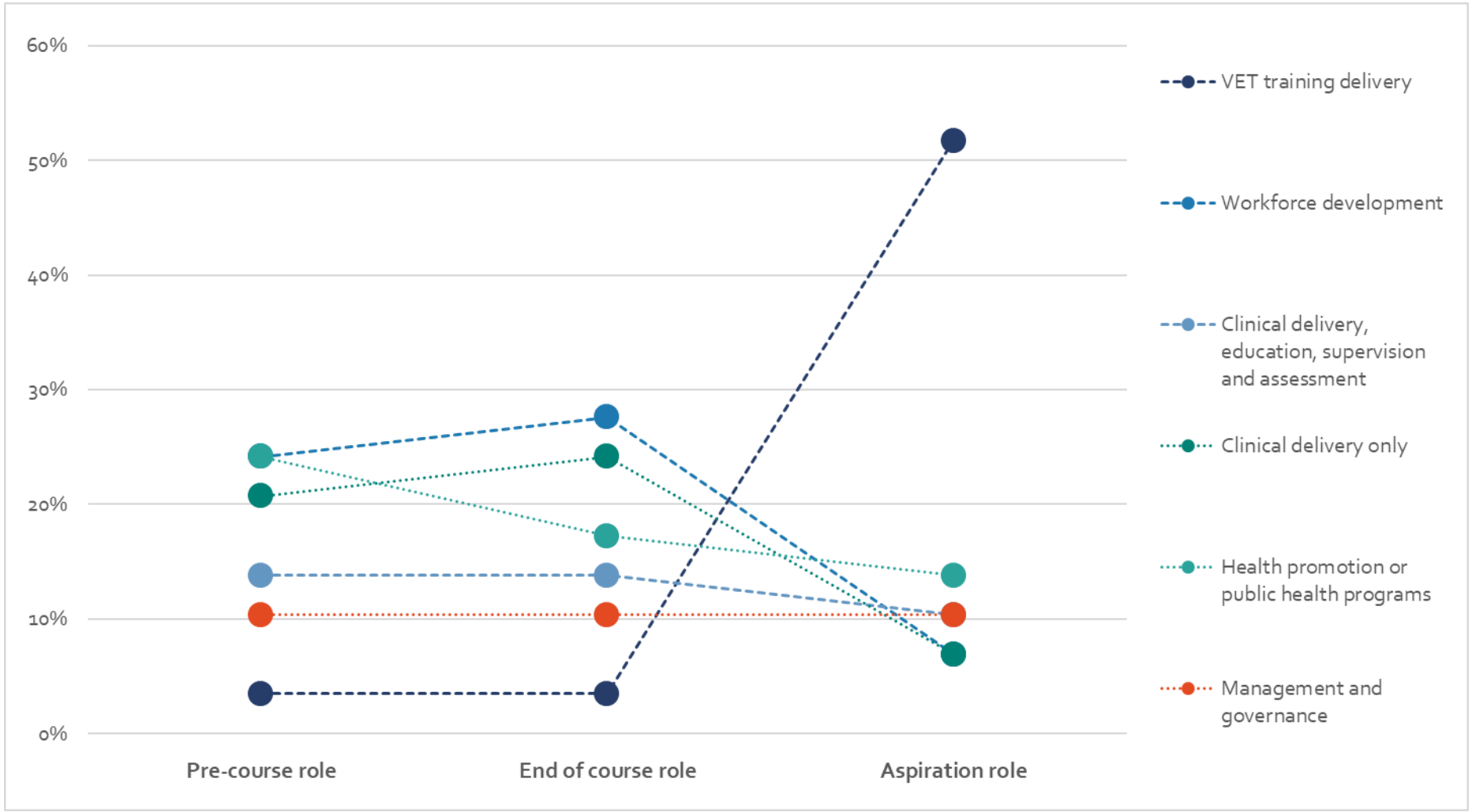
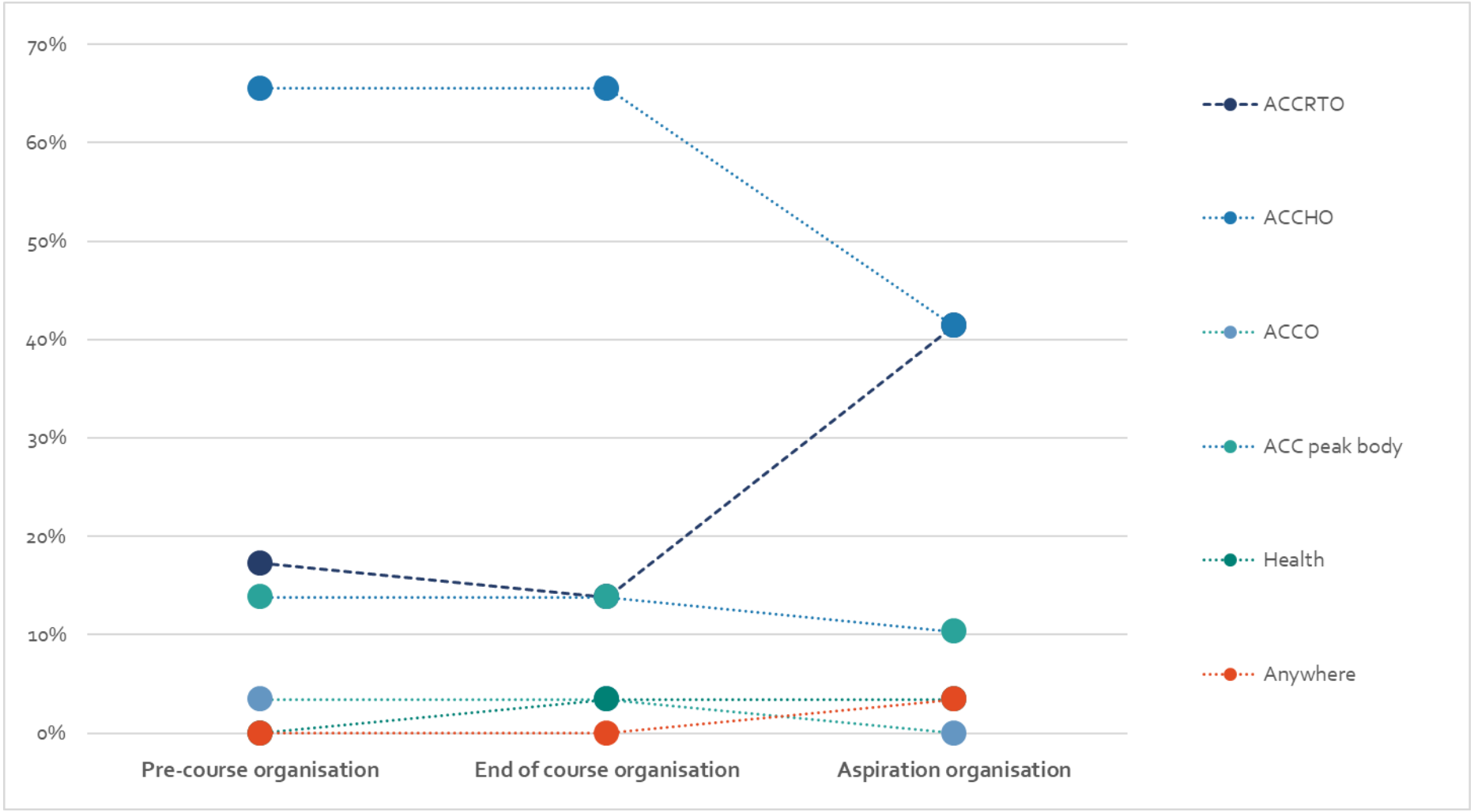


Figure 17: Student career journeys - ORGANISATIONS: pre-course, end of course and aspiration (n = 29)



3.5 Emergent topics in the evaluation conversations

Two other topics emerged during evaluation conversations with employers, host RTOs and NACCHO. The first was unsolicited reflections on the relationship between the TAEDP and the larger NACCHO-led workforce development program, the FNHWTP (see Section 1.1). The second was on the future of the TAEDP within the ACCH sector.

Reflections on the TAEDP and FNHWTP relationship

As employers, ACCHOs shared what difference the TAEDP was making in their unique contexts. They described how TAEDP students are contributing positively to the training journey of and workplace support for trainees they have enrolled in the FNHWTP. They described benefits such as having better workforce development and support systems, reduced staffing costs and enabling a training and workforce pipeline through offering training opportunities and career pathways for community members into the health sector.

> *"[Two of our students were] chucked in the deep end and done [sic] an awesome job of quickly taking on training [in a crisis]. The other two students supervise trainees while in the clinic. They kind of did this before, but now they are trained in the TAEs, they now understand **how** to complete the observation books for the trainees. Before it was all on one person/trainer [in our ACCHO/RTO] to complete this, but now the workload is spread." (Employer #1)*
>
> *"We realised that people who did the TAE would be that bridge to support trainees in applying their learning in the workplace. Now we have embedded systems to support future trainees from people doing the TAE. For our context, with no Aboriginal RTO, [having staff do] this TAE [and become Student Support Managers] really helped trainees' completion because normally Aboriginal RTOs have higher completion rates." (Employer #2)*
>
> *"[Having TAE qualified staff] reduces our dependency on FIFO staff by building the health service capability of local community members and reduces the cost of it. [The TAE qualified staff offering on Country training] provide a career pathway for community members into the health sector. This also creates health literacy, economic development and lower reliance on outside support. Overall, it improves health outcomes." (Employer #4)*

In many ways, ACCHOs saw the TAEDP as a "*game changer*" that supported the FNHWTP to work more effectively, as a long-needed essential workforce development program for the ACCH sector that would result in them having a larger pool of work-ready potential staff.

Future of the TAEDP

Both employers and host RTOs initiated conversations on the future of the TAEDP. They were very conscious it was another 'pilot' project, with significant risk of not being refunded despite need and their positive experience of its benefits so far, which they believed will sustain over the longer term.

Key features of their commentary included how a one-year project would not resolve a decade or more of workforce shortages, in training and assessment and the health workforce, and the NACCHO model addresses the consistently raised concerns about the effectiveness of other public and private RTO models.

"We need a five-to-ten-year plan to fund a few trainees per year to address the workforce shortage crisis." (Employer #2)

"We have big workforce shortages. We need to grow our own and create careers on Country into the health sector….how much can we insource the training pipeline?" (Employer #4)

"We need to promote this model through DEWR. We try to talk about it but sometimes people get jealous, so we turn it down a bit. The states are still broken because they are TAFE-centred – there is room for everyone else." (Employer #3)

I was going to put another two staff members into the program…but we might not have funding for it, which is very difficult. Being an AHP is a very specialist skill, and it is hard to recruit them because we're pulling them from their community. But they don't have a TAE, so need to train so they can train more AHPs. It is an issue - hopefully something will come out of this project." (Host RTO #2)

One host RTO emphasised that a shift to a national focus was essential for flexible and innovative training and education strategies that would be more sustainable for the ACCH sector and the VET-trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce in general.

"It has to stay national. We need a national pool of facilitators. We're more dynamic. We can bring more people in with targeted expertise as opposed to one trainer for everyone trying to do everything. It's more dynamic and engaging. Then we can have more flexibility with assessments. If [our RTO] has an online assessment to mark, we can send out a national email to find a casual marker for a few hours. That's how TAFEs work – we don't have that pool. Then we can all start sharing trainers and assessors for different things. The compliance and all that stuff will become easier because we have a bank of people who can do that virtually.

The longer this program goes, the more rich exposure and innovation we will have in training and assessing to build confidence of our teachers, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers. If we don't have confident trainers, we won't have confident Health Workers. It will help build a sustainable approach for the sector. This is what VET was meant to be – industry embedded and led and responsive. It will be more aligned to the national package because we're doing it nationally." (Host RTO #1)

4: Conclusions and recommendations

The recommendations flowing from conclusions about the TAEDP are identified in blue boxes on the right side of the page. They are linked to the relevant location in the narrative, so not in their final order. The final order is listed in Section 4.3.

4.1 Progress towards the main objective

There is one main objective for the TAEDP with one linked impact indicator:



As of July 2025, this one-year demonstration project is showing strong signs that the first component of the indicator has been achieved, i.e. a high proportion of TAE students complete their qualification. The current completion rate is 81%, which may increase in coming months if all or most of the five continuing students also complete their remaining assessment requirements.

What cannot yet be ascertained is an accurate proportion of TAE students who go on to be employed as trainers and/or assessors by ACCRTOs. The early signs are promising and involved employers and RTOs are already reporting notable benefits for training and workforce development initiatives that they are leading, either locally or as part of wider collaborative and/or national work.

A small but valuable investment would be to fund ongoing evaluation that prioritises student career journey tracking so this can be ascertained. However, through the experience of the project, it has become evident there are a range of valuable roles that TAE graduates can undertake in the ACCHO sector that contribute to good training outcomes, in addition to being a trainer or assessor working in an ACCRTO, which support effective VET outcomes.

Recommendation 4: Fund ongoing evaluation, with a high priority on student career journey tracking, so the second component of the impact indicator can be fully assessed.

The main two categories of roles are:

- **Workforce development:** workforce development coordinators and/or support staff, which involves supporting VET students and trainees, including mentoring, tutoring, RTO liaison and advice on clinical supervision and placement assessments.
- **Clinical or program:** staff with clinical education, supervision and assessment roles who also undertake clinical and/or program delivery as front-line, coordination or management staff.

Therefore, some flexibility in how the impact indicator can be interpreted is warranted.

While employers understand that the TAEDP and FNHWTP are two different initiatives, they experience the on-the-ground implementation within their ACCHOs in an integrated manner. This seems logical and natural for supporting an effective training and workforce pipeline. The importance

of the TAEDP for national workforce development initiatives is reflected in its integration within the FNHWTP program logic, which is available from NACCHO on request. However, the current downside is the difference in funding envelopes and timeframes.

The TAEDP was funded by DEWR as a 'demonstration project'. While this was an encouraging and long overdue development, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the ACCH sector more specifically, have a 50 year history of pilot projects that are often not refunded, replicated or expanded, despite evidence of their benefits and success.

There is a risk that the TAEDP may experience this fate. This would be unwise, given the current workforce shortage crisis, and at least two national CTG linked reports that identify strategies for strengthening the training and workforce pipeline and the role of VET training within this (Department of Health 2022), as well strengthening both the capacity and capability of ACCHRTOs (NACCHO 2024).

Recommendation 1: Advocate for funding continuation as an ongoing national program to meet and sustain the capacity of ACCRTOs to meet current and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce training needs.

Given the high completion rates and positive impacts that are already evident alongside the ongoing crisis of workforce shortages, and other CTG commitments to strengthen employment opportunities and outcomes, funding continuation is a high priority. As the TAEDP has successfully *demonstrated* immediate outcomes and its future potential, shifting from 'project' and 'demonstration' language to more sustainable 'program' and 'development' language is warranted for its title. This can occur without changing the acronym, which would sustain its brand name and recognition with the ACCH sector.

Recommendation 2: Retain the TAEDP acronym but replace 'demonstration' with 'development' and 'project' with 'program' in the full name.

Retaining the TAEDP will contribute to stronger outcomes from NACCHO's parallel and flagship workforce development program, the FNHWTP. Interviewed ACCHOs clearly understood the connection between the TAEDP and the FNHWTP, viewing the TAEDP as a critical enabler for the success of the FNHWTP.

Students with the TAE qualification, or one or more of the skill sets if they need a longer timeframe to complete the TAE, can support workforce development in both ACCHOs and ACCHRTO/ACCRTO, which expands and strengthens their workforce capability in local VET assessment and training. For ACCHOs, this includes effective clinical and student placements and supervision, as well as student and trainee mentoring and tutoring.

4.2 Project implementation

The TAEDP program had four core strategies with five linked process indicators. Conclusions about how well the TAEDP strategies were implemented are organised according to the process indicators.

Process indicator 1: All funded Cert IV TAE positions are filled and represent a diverse range of students.

The initial plan was to have three TAE student cohorts. When these available positions were rapidly oversubscribed, along with deciding to not overfill each cohort, NACCHO re-organised resources to create four cohorts. Overall, this led to 39 Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health (ACCH) sector staff completing the TAE as of early August 2025, with potential for this to increase to 44 in the near future as a further five students are continuing with the course and have gained one or more Statements of Attainment for skill sets completed.

The students who enrolled in the TAE represented diversity based on their jurisdictional and geographic distribution, as well as age, gender and existing qualifications. A much higher proportion of women enrolled (81%) compared to men, with an even balance between students who were 18 to 40 years compared to over 41 years. There was strong representation from regional and rural locations (43%) and remove and very remote locations (32%), compared to metropolitan (25%).

Process indicator 2: Students and their workplace are satisfied with training content and delivery, and the flexibility of delivery to meet their needs.

Satisfaction with the TAE training content, its delivery and the flexibility of the delivery to meet student needs was extremely high for both students and their workplaces. Students rated these three areas, which resulted in an average of 4.6 or higher for content, delivery and flexibility on a 5-point Likert Scale where 1 = terrible and 5 = great. Employer experiences verified these student ratings.

Three consistent features emerged for what students valued about their training experience:

- **Well-structured course:** Students valued the condensed approach through having four training blocks across five to six months, with the opportunity to visit different ACCRTOs working with the same cohort of students, which fostered peer support and networking. Having assessments organised and streamlined to minimise repetition, with many embedded into training blocks was greatly appreciated.
- **Outstanding trainer:** Students found the trainer to be experienced, responsive and as open to personal learning as he was to being a facilitator of their learning. He adjusted content to reflect where individuals and the group were at collectively, translated content into examples relevant to their sector and contexts, supported flexibility where students needed this, and encouraged and enabled students to succeed by utilising their strengths, and supporting them to own their knowledge, skills and achievements. Students who stayed connected with the trainer following completion of the course appreciated his responsiveness and the further mentoring he offered.
- **Culturally safe environment:** This was facilitated by all cohorts consisting of predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the dedicated efforts of the non-Indigenous trainer to both consider and strengthen his cultural safety, and the highly respectful and effective relationship between the trainer and the Aboriginal NACCHO staff members who were onsite working with the trainer and students at each block.

Despite these strong positive outcomes, students proposed four areas where, from their perspective, improvement is possible. First, it would be ideal to reach a point where there is ***an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander trainer*** who co-delivers with MRWED or fully delivers the TAE. This will require NACCHO, in collaboration with MRWED and the National RTO Network, to create and source funding to implement a succession plan.

This succession plan needs to include strategies that build both confidence and experience for TAE graduates. Example strategies are a one year TAE graduate mentoring program and an ongoing TAE Community of Practice, as well as opportunities for upgrading their qualification to a Diploma in Vocational Education and Training, which is a required qualification for managing VET compliance requirements, i.e. each RTO must have at least one staff member with currency in this qualification, as well as acknowledging training and assessment experience and expertise.

Recommendation 5: Develop and source funding to implement a succession plan so part and preferably all the TAE can be co-delivered or fully delivered by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainer in future.

Second, while students valued visiting different ACCRTOs, some suggested offering at least some ***on-country training*** options which could strengthen cultural safety and address practical matters, i.e. long travel times to attend blocks, being away from family and community and ensuring family and community obligations can be met. NACCHO needs to consider whether this is viable, based on student numbers and locations, as it is likely that in any cohort, at least some students may need to travel.

Third, one of the cohorts with a non-Indigenous student requested ***eligibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students*** only as an equity measure, which is consistent with national strategies focused on increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce numbers. Fourth, ***increasing the course length*** was also raised so the course was spread out with longer time periods between blocks.

Recommendation 6: Assess the viability of implementing student feedback regarding on-country training, course eligibility criteria and the number of months over which the course runs.

Process indicator 3: Students report wraparound support is sufficient, culturally safe and flexible from the RTO, NACCHO and their workplace.

Wraparound support strategies were offered by the delivery RTO, but particularly by NACCHO and, to a lesser degree, student workplaces. Students rated the delivery RTO, NACCHO and their workplace on a 5-point Likert Scale where 1 = terrible and 5 = great to identify whether wraparound support was enough/sufficient, flexible and culturally safe.

The delivery RTO wraparound support was highly rated, with averages of 4.8 for being enough/ sufficient and flexibility, and 4.9 for cultural safety. Students believed the trainer was invested in the training, supported them every step of the journey and was committed to them succeeding.

Similarly, they highly valued NACCHO's wraparound support, with average ratings of 4.9 for being enough/sufficient and flexibility, and 4.8 for cultural safety. Key features that characterised this support were the strong relationship between MRWED and NACCHO, NACCHO's excellent communication and action, and the unwavering care and support of NACCHO staff for students, where nothing was too much trouble.

The availability and nature of workplace wraparound support varied significantly between students. Average ratings ranged from 4.1 for being enough/sufficient and flexibility, and 4.4 for cultural safety. When support was available it was found to be beneficial; the smaller group who experienced limited support and understanding for their work found this detrimental, so leaned into the delivery RTO and NACCHO support to help them complete the course.

Two strategies were proposed for improving workplace support; they were raised by both students and the delivery RTO:

- **NACCHO to book travel:** NACCHO centrally coordinating travel would alleviate reimbursement worries and ensure all students stay together, for cultural safety reasons, as well as making it easier to get to the training venue and other cohort activities.

Recommendation 7: Centralise student travel coordination and bookings so they are managed by NACCHO.

- **NACCHO to establish an agreement or contract with workplaces:** Requiring workplaces to sign an agreement or contract with NACCHO would strengthen accountability for providing appropriate support to students, including resources such as laptops, sufficient paid time to complete assessment tasks, and clearer understanding of training content and requirements.

Recommendation 8: Establish a formal agreement or contract with student workplaces to enhance accountability for providing required wraparound support.

Process indicator 4: All students can access a) language, literacy, numeracy and digital supports, and b) mentoring and tutoring support.

The delivery RTO offered a range of learning supports, including language, literacy, numeracy and digital support, as well as mentoring and tutoring. Most students were aware that they could access these supports, except for a handful in Cohort 1.

When asked explicitly about these supports, some students realised they had accessed them, both formally through directly requesting them or informally through the trainer offering them assistance in one or more of these areas, which they took up. Workplaces were also aware that their staff utilised these learning supports and valued that they were available.

Process indicator 5: Students are *satisfied* with a) language, literacy, numeracy and digital supports, and b) mentoring and tutoring support.

All learning supports were rated highly by students, with averages between 4.4 and 4.9 on a 5-point Likert Scale where 1 = terrible and 5 = great. Students experienced the learning supports as: flexible and always available, being well targeted to student needs, and extending above and beyond support from other public and private RTO providers, based on their previous experience.

CORE FEATURES OF THE NACCHO TAE COURSE AND DELIVERY MODEL

In summary, the core features of NACCHO's TAE course and delivery model are:

- Eligibility criteria based on cultural identity, suitable vocational competencies and industry experience, digital literacy, workforce training and assessment experience, willingness to become an RTO trainer and/or assessor, commitment to complete the course and workplace commitment for employment in VET-related roles.
- Prioritise students from NACCHO Members, Affiliates and ACCRTOs.
- Fully fund the TAE course costs, with additional funding provided to workplaces to meet travel, accommodation and meal costs.
- Deliver training in a condensed manner through four intensive training blocks over six months, structured in a manner that creates four skill sets, one linked to each training block, and ensures students receive Statements of Attainment for each skill set completed.
- Maintain consistency of trainer(s) and NACCHO staff for each student cohort.
- Provide intensive learning, cultural and wraparound supports through the combined input of the delivery RTO, NACCHO staff and the workplace; this includes a student-centred Community of Practice and a dedicated and suitably qualified NACCHO staff member working alongside the trainer providing cultural, social-emotional wellbeing, logistical and mentoring support.
- Gain a commitment from workplaces to support and mentor students throughout their training journey and give them opportunities to apply their enhanced knowledge and skills.
- Place a high priority on cultural safety through all aspects of course planning, implementation and evaluation.
- Evaluate outcomes with the support of external evaluators.

The outcomes against the five process indicators indicate that these core features have been vital to a high quality implementation process resulting in good training outcomes. All evaluation participant groups, and a high proportion within each, consistently confirmed these core features in terms of them creating a training experience that is culturally safe, flexible, and provides sufficient support so students can manage other matters (such as workplace, personal, community and/or cultural obligations) without needing to withdraw from the course. Therefore, it is essential for any future funding that is secured for the TAEDP is sufficient to maintain the core features of the NACCHO delivery model to maximise ongoing success.

Recommendation 3: Ensure the funding envelope is sufficient to maintain all core features of the NACCHO TAE course and delivery model, and any recommended implementation improvements and expansions.

4.3 Recommendations

The TAEDP evaluation has generated the following eight recommendations across two areas of focus.

FUTURE OF THE TAEDP

Recommendation 1 – Funding continuation as an ongoing national program: Advocate for funding continuation as an ongoing national program, allowing for a minimum of two training cohorts per year, which will ensure ACCRTOs have capacity to meet current and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce training needs.

Recommendation 2 – Program name: Retain the TAEDP acronym but replace 'demonstration' with 'development' and 'project' with 'program' in the full name, i.e. *Training and Assessment Education Development Program*.

Recommendation 3 – NACCHO TAE course and delivery model: Ensure the funding envelope is sufficient to maintain all core features of the NACCHO TAE course and delivery model, and any recommended implementation improvements and expansions.

Recommendation 4 – Ongoing evaluation and student career journey tracking: Fund ongoing evaluation, with a high priority on student career journey tracking, so the second component of the impact indicator can be fully assessed.

IMPLEMENTATION OF A FUTURE PROGRAM

These recommendations assume that Recommendation 1 is implemented.

Recommendation 5 – An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainer: Develop and source funding to implement a trainer succession plan so part and preferably all the TAE can be co-delivered or fully delivered by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainer in future. Consider strategies such as:

- a one year TAE graduate mentoring program, an ongoing TAE Community of Practice
- opportunities for upgrading the TAE to a Diploma in Vocational Education and Training.

Recommendation 6 – Assess viability of student feedback: Assess the viability of implementing the following student feedback:

- Could on-country training occur for the TAE?
- Should criteria be tightened so only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are eligible?
- Could the number of months over which the course runs be extended, while retaining the four blocks of intensive training, so there are longer time periods between blocks?

Recommendation 7 – Student travel: Centralise student travel coordination and bookings so they are managed by NACCHO.

Recommendation 8 – Workplace wraparound support: Establish a formal agreement or contract with student workplaces to enhance accountability for providing required workplace wraparound support.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Project design features

Eligibility criteria to enrol in the TAE

1: Identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, but if not, the ACCRTO or ACCHO needed to explain their rationale for proposing a non-Indigenous staff member.

2: Hold current vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered and assessed, e.g. Certificate IV. This could be across a wide range of qualifications relevant to the ACCH sector, including but not limited to being an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker or Practitioner, e.g. allied health, alcohol and other drugs, disability, aged care, governance, mental health, social-emotional wellbeing, early childhood or leadership and management.

3: Have digital literacy and a sound application of computer programs, e.g. MS Word or Outlook (however, if this was an area the student needed to strengthen, this could be nominated so that digital literacy wraparound support could be provided).

4: Be willing to train and assess for the RTO if they are the employer or another RTO.

5: Have a commitment to complete the training

6: Participate in NACCHO's evaluation

7: Have a commitment from the RTO (or ACCHO) to have employment opportunities during and post qualification

Funding support

- Full course fees
- Travel and accommodation reimbursement, and travel allowance of $20/meal on days where meals are not provided
- A polo shirt

Workforce training and assessment requirements

Once students complete the TAE, to be work ready to train and assess for an RTO, they need to either have or be on track to have:

- the vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered and assessed
- current industry skills directly relevant to the training and assessment being provided
- current knowledge and skills in vocational training and learning that informs their training and assessment (i.e. the TAE qualification)
- be AHPRA registered (if required for qualification being delivered and assessed).

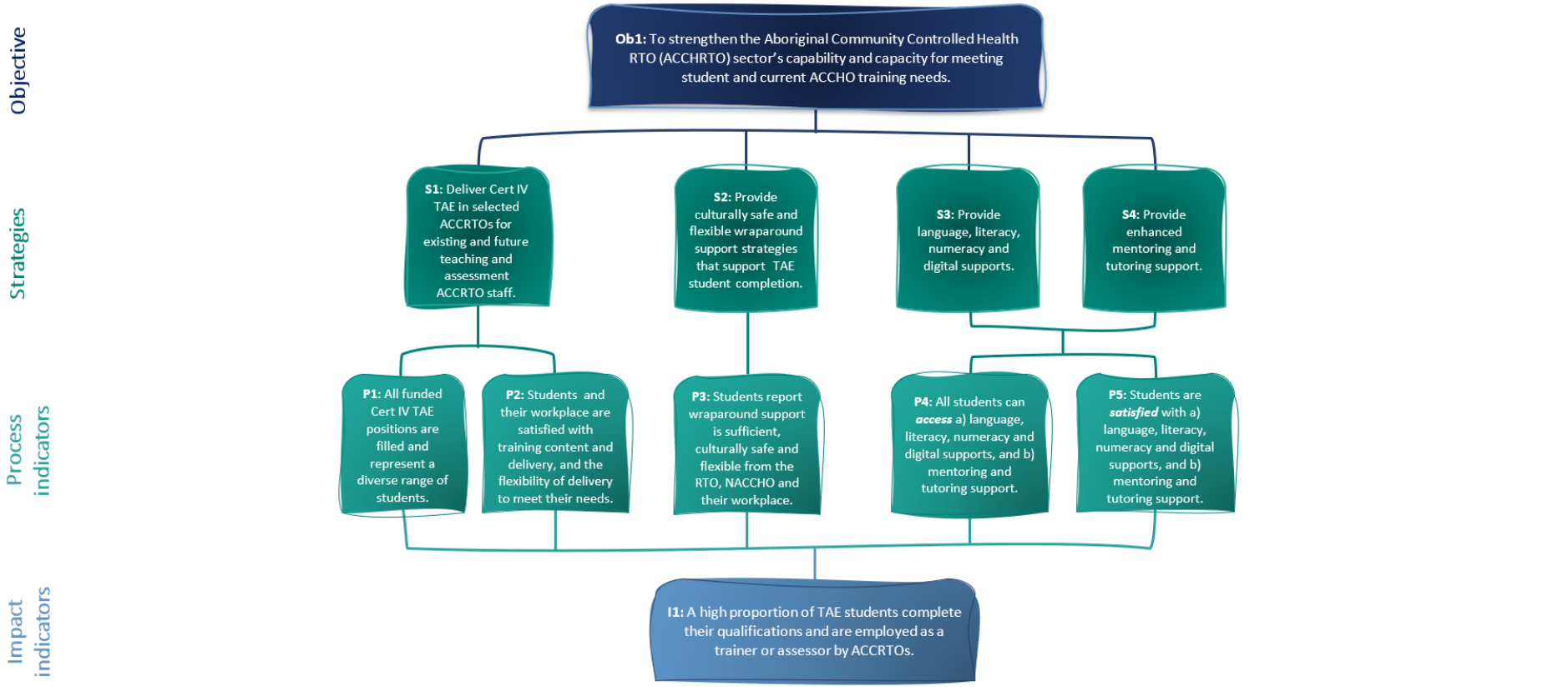
Course cohorts, timing and locations

	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Cohort 3	Cohort 4
Block 1	8 – 12 July 2024 (Sydney)	9-13 September 2024 (Brisbane)	17-21 February 2025 (Brisbane)	3 – 7 March 2025 (Sydney)
Block 2	12- 16 August 2024 (Brisbane)	21-25 October 2024 (Sydney)	24-28 March 2025 (Adelaide)	7 - 11 April 2025 (Adelaide)
Block 3	14-18 October 2024 (Perth)	25-29 November 2024 (Perth)	28 April – 2 May 2025 (Perth)	19 – 23 May 2025 (Sydney)
Block 4	18-22 November 2024 (Adelaide)	3-7 February 2025 (Adelaide)	16-20 June 2025 (Sydney)	7 – 11 July 2025 (Brisbane)

Wraparound support structures for students

The range of wraparound supports are listed in Figure 8 in Section 3.2 of the report. Wraparound support was predominantly provided by NACCHO and the delivery RTO, although workplaces were also expected to provide wraparound support to their students – at a minimum, paid time for attending each block of intensive training and travel funding using the resources NACCHO provided to the workplace.

Appendix B: TAEDP program logic



Appendix C: Evaluation activity guides

YARNING CIRCLE GUIDE FOR STUDENTS



1. Would you like to share a bit about yourself and how you came to do the TAE course?
2. For those who have accessed learning support from the delivery RTO during the TAE course, please reflect on the different types of support and rate your experience of the supports.
3. For those who accessed wraparound support from the delivery RTO, please reflect on your experience of this support and rate the three areas (enough support, flexibility, cultural safety).
4. If you accessed any wraparound support from NACCHO or from your workplace, please reflect on your experience of it and rate your experience of the three areas (enough support, flexibility, cultural safety).
5. Please reflect on how satisfied you are with the flexibility of the training, and then with the training content and delivery.

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR WORKPLACES



1. How many students have you supported through the TAE program? How many are now finished?
2. Overall, how has the program gone for you?
3. Can you share with us what you've heard from students about how flexible the course was for them?
4. Have you been involved in providing wraparound support to your students?
5. Can you share with us if and how your students' work roles have changed after completing their qualifications?

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR HOST RTOS



1. How many students have you supported through the TAE program? How many students are now finished?
2. Overall, how has the program gone for you?
3. Can you share with us what you've heard from your students about how flexible the course was for them?
4. Have you been involved in providing wraparound support to your students from an RTO point of view? If so, how has this gone?
5. Have you been involved in providing wraparound support to your students from an employer point of view? If so, how has this gone?
6. Although we know the delivery RTO, Mr Wed, provides learning support to students, have you been involved in providing this kind of support to the students? If so, how has this gone?
7. Can you share with us if and how your students' work roles have changed after completing their qualifications?

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR DELIVERY RTO

Course flexibility | **Support strategies** | **Students' employment**

1. Can you share with us your experience and/or what students have shared with you about how they found the flexibility of the course?
2. What did the wraparound support you provided to students look like? What feedback did you get from students about this support?
3. What feedback did you get from students about the learning support you provided?
4. Can you tell us generally how students went with completing their qualifications?

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR NACCHO

1. Overall, how do you think the TAE program went compared to what you initially hoped?
2. Can you share what wraparound supports you provided and how this went for students?
3. Can you share what learning supports you provided and how this went for students?
4. What did you learn about providing these supports that would help you with a continuation of the program or other similar programs? Specifically, what would you keep doing and what could you improve?

Appendix D: TAE training clusters

Together with MRWED, NACCHO clustered the core and elective units of the TAE40122 Certificate IV Training and Assessment to create skill sets and aligned delivery of each cluster with the four blocks across the TAE course.

Clusters	Units	Skillset
Introduction to VET	▪ **TAEPDD401** Work effectively in vocational education and training (Core) ▪ **TAEDEL311** Provide work skill instruction (Elective Group A) ▪ **TAELLN423** Integrate employability skills support into training and assessment (Elective Group B) ▪ **TAELLN422** Use foundation skills resources, strategies and advice (Elective Group B)	**TAESS00028** Work Skill Instructor Skill Set
Facilitation skills	▪ **TAEDES412** Design and develop plans for vocational training (Core) ▪ **TAEDEL411** Facilitate vocational training (Core)	**TAESS00021** Facilitation Skill Set
Assessor skills	▪ **TAEDES411** Use nationally recognised training products to meet vocational training needs (Core) ▪ **TAEASS412** Assess competence (Core) ▪ **TAEASS413** Participate in assessment validation (Core)	**TAESS00019** Assessor Skill Set
Supporting work-based learning	▪ **TAELLN421** Integrate core skills support into training and assessment (Elective Group B) ▪ **TAEDEL412** Facilitate workplace-based learning (Elective Group A) ▪ **TAEDEL414** Mentor in the workplace (Elective Group A)	**TAESS00020** Workplace Trainer Skill Set **TAESS00026** Foundation Skills Integration Skill Set **TAELLN423** Integrate employability skills support into training and assessment