

13/7/2021

OPEN LETTER to the Hon. James Merlino MP,
Deputy Premier and Minister for Education

The Hon. Gayle Tierney MP
Minister for Higher Education, Training and Skills

Timothy Binks, Director, Workforce Analytics and Strategy,
Department of Education and Training

Subject: The Design and Technologies Teacher Shortage in Victoria

Dear Ministers,

As a matter of urgency, DATTA Vic exhorts the State Government and Department of Education and Training to:

- Extend the eligibility for the *Pathways into Teaching* funding for the Masters Teaching (Design and Technologies/Systems Engineering) programs at Swinburne and Victoria Universities
- Widen the VET/VCAL *Workforce Reform Program* to include secondary Design and Technology and Systems Engineering teacher training
- Extend the *Secondary Maths and Science Initiative* to include the upskilling of teachers in T and E of STEM (Technology and Engineering)
- Initiate discussions with Victorian universities to encourage and support the establishment of undergraduate and post-graduate courses that will address the dire shortage of Technologies teacher training in Victoria.

DATTA Vic are very grateful for the responses you provided following our previous correspondence with you on the critical shortage of Design and Technologies (D&T) teachers - including VCE Product Design and Technology and VCE Systems Engineering educators - in Victoria. We have had several meetings with the Department of Education's Workforce Analytics and Strategy unit and have appreciated the opportunity to discuss the matter in more depth. We acknowledge that the Government is delivering a number of initiatives designed to tackle the overall shortage of teachers in Victoria, however, in most cases, these programs are not addressing the specific needs of our learning area.

The *Victorian Teacher Supply and Demand Report* makes evident the critical lack of Design and Technologies teachers in Victoria and makes evident the need for more supported opportunities to undertake initial teacher education. There are currently two Victorian-based Universities offering a Design and Technologies / Systems Engineering specialisation on their *Masters of Secondary Education* - Swinburne University and Victoria University. Neither of these programs are eligible for the *Pathways into Teaching* funding. We would urge the Government to include them in this initiative. The Australian Catholic University's Master of Teaching (Secondary) is eligible for funding, and it does have a Design and Technologies method, but this is currently only available to pre-service teachers at their Strathfield NSW campus.

We have recently been made aware of the funding for retraining industry professionals to become VET qualified teachers through your *VET/VCAL Workforce Reform Program*. We welcome this incentive to encourage practitioners from trade and industry to make a career change into VET teaching, and we have put this forward on several occasions as an effective strategy to tackle the Design & Technologies (D&T) teacher shortage. However, with restricting this initiative to VET teachers, it means it will have no impact on the lack of educators delivering the mandatory Design & Technologies curriculum in Victorian Schools - which is distinctly different from VET education. We would urge you to consider a similar incentive for secondary D&T educators. If industry professionals from design and engineering fields can be encouraged to consider a career change into teaching and receive monetary support while they study through the *Pathways* program, this would go some way to addressing the issue.

Following the cancellation of La Trobe University's *Bachelor of Technology Education* last year, there has been no option in Victoria for people with a trade or industry qualification or experience but without an Undergraduate degree to retrain as a D&T teacher. Australian Catholic University have stated their intention to deliver their *Bachelor of Secondary Education/Bachelor of Arts (Technology)* online from 2023. This has great potential to retrain designers and engineers as D&T teachers. However, for most industry professionals, it would be a significant move to step away from work to become a pre-service teacher – particularly in light of the disruption to our country from Covid-19. If some kind of financial incentive were available as you have established in your *VET/VCAL Workforce Reform Program*, this would encourage more professionals to take the leap and retrain.

The *Secondary Maths and Science Initiative (SMSI)* is one of the Government's major programs to tackle the lack of STEM educators by upskilling out of area teachers. However, despite the shortage being even greater in the Technologies learning area, there is no similar initiative with this focus. We are the *Technologies* and *Engineering* of STEM education and leaders of design-based learning that has been adopted and promoted through the DET's Tech Schools' initiative, yet within schools, we receive little support. ACU also plan to offer their *Graduate Diploma in Design & Technologies Education* online in 2023, which will make it accessible for out-of-field Victorian teachers who wish to retrain as a D&T teacher. Again, were this program to receive additional financial support as with SMSI, this move could have a significant impact on the critical shortage. DATTA Australia have created this [list](#) of all training & retraining options in Design and Technologies in Australia. As you will see, Victoria lags behind the other states - particularly New South Wales - in options. If we want our state to be at the heart of innovation in the future, we must act now.

Yours sincerely,



Travis Burroughs,
DATTA Vic President