

# Professor Stephen Billett



## **Presentation title**

Positioning vocational education and the occupations it serves as worthy post-school pathways

## **Biography**

Dr Stephen Billett is Professor of Adult and Vocational Education at Griffith University, Australia, a National Teaching Fellow, an Australian Research Council Future Fellow, Fulbright scholar and has honorary doctorates from the University of Jyväskylä, Finland and the University of Geneva. He has worked in the manufacturing sector, as a vocational educator, educational administrator, teacher educator, professional development practitioner and policy work in Australian vocational education and as a teacher and researcher at Griffith University.

## **Presentation abstract**

The relative low standing of vocational education and training (VET) and the occupations it serves is an impediment to how this important education sector is resourced, supported and engaged with by schools, young people and their parents. Increasingly, in an era of high aspiration, VET is viewed as an option only for those unable to secure university entrance. This can lead to mismatches between the kinds of skills young people are learning in tertiary education and employment opportunities, with what employers seek in employees, and lengthy and potentially unproductive tertiary education pathways. Positioning VET as a worthwhile post-school pathway for young Australians is now important for them individually, for communities needing these skills and workplaces whose continuity is premised on employees' skills.

This workshop engages participants with insights from international studies and presses them into discussing and identifying professional relevance from the findings of an Australian research project investigating how to position VET as being a more worthwhile, attractive and viable options for young

people and those influence their decisions about post-school pathways. The investigation comprises interviews and focus groups to secure perceptions and suggestions of Queensland parents, school and VET students, and teachers in metropolitan and regional communities. A survey was administered nationally to verify and extend these findings, followed by workshops and focus groups with teachers and administrators to review and refine draft strategies for positioning VET and the occupations it serves as viable post-school options.

The findings suggest positioning VET in this way requires an approach with four distinct elements: i) a public education process – e.g. give VET a ‘fair go’ – promoted by government; ii) actions by schools and VET institutions to *holistically* promote, inform and advise about post-school pathways; iii) VET institutions offering more attractive social and learning environments, easier engagement with information and enrolment processes, and broad-based program options; and iv) a concerted effort and leadership by government and industry sectors to promote the occupations VET serves. It is with these issues that the participants will engage in the workshop.