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Responding to biodiversity emergencies



Biodiversity emergencies need careful planning to ensure the best possible outcomes for the people, animals and environment involved. A biodiversity emergency is a sudden unforeseen crisis that involves a serious threat to native terrestrial, marine or freshwater species, and the ecosystems they inhabit, which requires immediate action.

VETASSESS is currently working with the Department of Sustainability and Environment on a workforce skills development project that involves creating a capability framework for response and management of cetacean (marine mammal) entanglements and strandings across Victoria. While not common in Victoria, the

Department is keen to ensure it can respond to all cetacean emergencies, from whales entangled in fishing lines or nets to pods of whales stranded on a beach.

The last mass stranding in Victoria occurred in 1983 when 83 False Killer whales were beached at Croajingolong National Park in East Gippsland.

Incidents of cetacean stranding and entanglements, especially those with larger numbers of animals, attract a lot of public and media attention, and can require a significant number of personnel and volunteers. While a cetacean entanglement response usually requires fewer people, the task of disentangling a large whale is highly specialised with extreme safety risks to those involved.

The framework will assist to build a core group of qualified and experienced staff who can respond to these emergencies, and will also have provision for external people who assist with emergencies, such as non-government organisations and volunteers.

The capability framework will include a model of cover, a competency framework outlining key skills and knowledge, a comparison of the framework against current training provisions and an implementation plan to address skill gaps.

"This project utilises our skills and experience in workforce skills development solutions," said Karen Berkley, Executive Director VETASSESS. "It will assist the department to provide a timely, consistent and high standard response to cetacean emergencies in the future."

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Canada update



Greg Fountain

A senior VETASSESS project officer is now working in Canada for 12 months as part of the major workforce skills development project VETASSESS is undertaking for the Industry Training Authority (ITA) in British Columbia.

Greg Fountain is based in Vancouver but working across the country to assist ITA in setting up a framework for a new national assessment system. The project is being undertaken under the auspices of the Canadian Council of Apprenticeships based in Ottawa.

Since late 2008, VETASSESS has been working with the ITA to develop and pilot new approaches to recognise the skills of existing workers and to develop a national accreditation system. Previously, trade qualifications were provincially based and additional tests and evidence of work experience were required for national recognition.

The first stage of the project was to pilot new competency standards and assessment systems for cooks. VETASSESS staff worked with ITA staff to develop the standards and assessments, and to conduct pilots for practising cooks across British Columbia. Assessors were also trained in conducting competency assessments.

Stage two, currently underway, is a second pilot involving heavy duty equipment technicians, this time with industry specialists developing the standards and VETASSESS taking the role of expert advisor. This stage is being piloted nationally across all provinces in Canada and, as a result, Greg will be travelling to many locations across Canada including Edmonton, Fredericton, Saskatoon, Toronto, Winnipeg and Halifax.

For more information contact Karen Berkley on +61 3 9655 4801 or karenb@vetassess.com.au



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Skilled worker assessment – skills assessments for subclass 457

VETASSESS is approved by the Australian Government to conduct skills assessments for temporary worker (subclass 457) visas, which are visas for employers who want to hire overseas workers to fill nominated skilled positions in Australia.

A skills assessment is an evaluation of the worker's skills and knowledge against formal Australian qualifications in that trade. It involves looking at training and employment work history to see if the applicants have the skills required in Australia. Generally, this will be followed by a technical interview via webcam or a practical assessment in the applicant's own country.

VETASSESS holds regular in-country assessments in the Philippines and organises assessments in other countries on request. Discounts can be negotiated for groups of 12 or more in same trade area.

Skills assessments can be undertaken for the following trade occupations:

- welder (first class)
- metal machinist (first class)
- sheet metal worker (first class)
- general fabrication engineering tradesperson
- general mechanical engineering tradesperson
- motor mechanic
- cook/chef
- metal fabricator
- fitter
- panel beater
- and more.

A skills assessment is one part of an application for a temporary worker visa. Other requirements include employer sponsorship and a minimum International English Language Test Score of 5 (IELTS).

For more information on skills assessment contact Sue Hamilton, email workassess@vetassess.com.au or tel +61 3 9655 4801.



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Assessment centre opens in China



Pictured: Director of Chongqing Education Commission Mr. Peng Zhi Yong, Karen Berkley and Party Secretary Sun Wei Ping of Chongqing College of Electronic Engineering

Karen Berkley, Executive Director of VETASSESS, visited Chongqing, China in May to officiate at the establishment of the first China-Australia Skills Assessment Centre, together with Sun Wei Ping, Party Secretary of the joint venture partner Chongqing College of Electronic Engineering.

Applicants from China who wish to undertake a skills assessment with VETASSESS will now be able to attend a technical interview in Chongqing.

This initiative has received strong support and assistance from the Chongqing Municipal Government and Education Commission and is considered an important achievement in vocational education and training reform in west China.

Jeffrey Yang, representing Iain Watt, Minister Counsellor (Education) at the Australia Embassy, Yan Xiao Guang, Deputy Secretary General of the Chongqing Municipal Government and Peng Zhi Yong, Director of the Chongqing Education Commission delivered their speeches in support of the development to 400 guests from Chongqing government offices, vocational institutes and industries.

On her visit, Karen was accompanied by Ray Griffiths, Chairman of the VETASSESS Board and Dr. Ho Sum Chan, Consultant China Project.



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assessitnow.com

Online testbanks are available for 13 Training Packages including automotive, hospitality and tourism, retail, business services, entertainment, electrotechnology, general construction, metals and engineering, rural production, and transport and distribution

The VETASSESS national online assessment system, **assessitnow.com**, provides easy access to high quality knowledge based tests and other assessment resources to support delivery and assessment of a wide range of training package qualifications.

The service is fast, efficient and user-friendly. Tests can be randomly generated or customised as required, saving valuable staff time and resources. And there are now more than 2500 assessment tools and testbanks to choose from, covering more than 800 units of competency.

All testbanks and assessment tools, which are prepared by expert writers in consultation with learning and assessment experts, industry leaders and industry organisations across Australia, undergo a rigorous quality check before being uploaded to the system. Students can complete their tests online or sit a print based version of the test if required, and results can be collated for individuals or groups. Teachers can also generate a range of data reports of individual and group performance against test items.

Available by subscription to all RTOs across Australia, assessitnow.com is used by trainers, assessors, teachers, industry personnel for students and RPL applicants.

For more information on **assessitnow.com** go to www.assessitnow.com. Select the 'information for teachers, trainers and assessors' link and watch a demonstration of the system in use.



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Exam supervisors wanted

Melbourne metro area
Own transport
Training provided
Flexible hours
Teaching or supervising experience is preferred
Contact **Claire Madison** on Tel: **9655 4849**



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