AMII: Now we’re ready for our first presentation which is going to be provided by Katerina Lawler who is the Assistant Secretary of the Policy and Regulations Branch in the VET Quality and Policy Division of the Australian Government’s Department of Education, Skills and Employment. Katerina has worked in higher education and policy program roles for 15 years and has worked in a range of major policy initiatives including policy and funding reviews and reforms. She was going to be joined by Danny Edmonds who was unable to make it today so I don’t have a great bio for Catherine Moore. I believe she’s the Director of the Teaching School and Leadership branch. Katerina, you may need to just clarify that. Welcome. Do you need me to share your presentation?

KATERINA: Yes please. Thank you very much.

AMII: I will give you a five-minute warning. We need to stick pretty tightly to time. My face will pop back up on the screen when you have five minutes left.

KATERINA: Lovely, thank you. I’ll do my very best to keep us to time and I’m sure my colleague Catherine will too. Thank you very much for that introduction Amii and to Catherine as well. We’re really happy to be engaging with you all here today. We’ve got a range of things that we will discuss and some of our upcoming opportunities. We want to step through some of the data relating to participation by students with disability. We’ll talk a bit about the uptake of e-learning resources that you just mentioned Amii which is really terrific. We will run through some information about the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Program which includes a specific component for apprentices with disability. We will be talking about the findings of the review of the disability standards for education and some future opportunities as part of the quality reforms under the heads of agreement for skills reform to better support students with disability. I’d also just really like to take this opportunity to quickly acknowledge the work that practitioners and providers continue to undertake to engage and support students with disability and so opportunities for practitioners to engage in events like this and communities of practice and other networks really highlight the commitment that the sector has in this space. If we can hop to the next slide we will start getting into it. Thank you. I’ll just run through some of the headline and we can follow up if people are interested in more outside of the session if needed. In 2019 which is the most current available data 172,400 students enrolled in VET stated they had disability representing 4.1% of all students. Interestingly the data shows that students with disability are more likely to enrol in full qualification. More than three in five students with disability enrolled in a full qualification in 2019. The data also shows that Australians with disability are less likely to participate in VET than Australians in general, however given the comparatively high number of students in VET who have an unknown disability status, the data for students with disability is most likely understated. Nevertheless, it’s an area that really deserves some further consideration from us when developing policy and programs to ensure that there are acceptable, attractive and viable options for students with disability when considering their future learning opportunities. In terms of the types of qualifications students with disability are more likely to choose, the most popular VET qualification in 2019 was the Certificate 3 in individual support with 7,700 students with disability enrolled. Students with disability were almost twice as likely to undertake this qualification compared to students without disability. Other popular courses for students with disability in 2019 included the Certificate 3 in Community Services with 4,300 enrolments and the Certificate 3 in Early Childhood Education and Care attracting 4,100 enrolments. It’s also worth noting that within the top 10 qualifications for 2019 for people with disability the prevalence in enrolments in qualification at the Certificate 3 level whereas the students without disability qualifications in that top 10 included a Certificate 4 qualification and two diploma qualifications. Having insight into that enables us to focus on how we can continue to support students with disability to consider qualifications above the Certificate 3 level. For those 2018 VET graduates interviewed in 2019 86.4% of students with disability reported that they were satisfied with the overall quality of training received and that compared to 88.3% for students overall. It will be interesting to see in particular how COVID-19 has impacted students’ satisfaction given the move to online delivery so we will be watching that with real interest. As I’ve said, I’ve only provided a real overview of some data highlights. People should certainly follow up with this if they’d like some more information and we’ll see what we can provide on that front but if we can move to the next slide now Amii that would be great. Thank you. You’ve mentioned these e-learning resources and I’ll do a really quick run through here. As you may be aware at the end of 2019 the National Disability Coordination Officer Program and the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training launched their two free e-learning training programs. I won’t repeat what Amii has already run through in terms of what the programs are about. The development of these was - I should acknowledge was jointly funded by the department and the Tasmanian Government’s Skills TAS Training and Work Pathways Program and it was to complement the release of the inclusion of people with disability cross sector units of competency. The training programs play a really important role in acknowledging and supporting the role the VET sector plays in improving lives of students with disability and they focus on how staff and educators can communicate, interact and respond to the needs of individuals to positively influence their experience and educational outcomes. In terms of take-up since the program’s release in late 2019 1,570 staff and educators have completed the training with a further 532 currently enrolled. Additionally, 96 organisations have downloaded the training system files which enables them to embed the programs into their own learning management system. It’s a really valuable resource and again it’s great to see it being actively promoted and I would encourage you to actively promote it across your organisations and across the sector as broadly as possible. Could we go to the next slide and we’ll just touch on some points around apprenticeship incentive programs. Australian apprenticeships are a really valuable way for individuals to gain qualifications while also undertaking paid employment and learning on the job. The Australian Government offers a range of assistance to Australian apprentices with disability to support them during their apprenticeships. Support is provided either directly or indirectly through their employer or training provider. This includes the disabled apprentice wage support payment which provides eligible employers with $104 per week as well as additional funding for an off the job tutor, mentor and interpreter assistance to support the student with their studies. To be eligible for this program employers are required to offer apprentices open employment and ensure they provide the apprentice with appropriate training and support. In recognition of the importance and encouraging employers to take on an apprentice with disability the wage support payment can be provided for multiple years over the life of an apprenticeship as long as employers can provide evidence the apprentice is progressing satisfactorily towards a successful completion of their apprenticeship. I’m conscious of the time so if we might go ahead to the next slide. At this point I’ll hand over to Catherine to introduce herself to talk a bit more about the review of disability standards for education.

CATHERINE: Thank you very much, Kat. I’m Catherine Moore and I’ve been trained now into updating my linked in profile. I’m actually in the Disability Strategy Taskforce now in the Department of Education, Skills and Employment and was responsible for leading the review of disability standards 2020.

Just a quick update, this is actually the third review of the standard. We’ve undertaken two reviews previously, one in 2010 and one in 2015. Previous reviews have tended to focus a little bit more on school education so we were very conscious this year with this review to try and get reviews of a broader range of sectors which we were able to do through the consultation process that we undertook. One of the things that we were looking to do is to place students with disability at the centre of the review so we reached out to disability peak bodies and asked them how we might best go about doing that. They gave us some fabulous advice and off we went, so public consultation for the review was held from the 16th July to the 25th September and during that time we heard from educators and students in the VET sector to national webinars, formal submissions, discussion boards, focus groups and an online questionnaire. The department also met national agencies, regulatory authorities and non-government organisations from the VET sector that included Australian Skills Quality Authority, Training and Accreditation Council Western Australia, the Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority, TAFE Directors Australia, the Australian Industry and Skills Committee, Skills for Australia, Skills IQ and ADCET. We really appreciated the time and expertise that representatives of the VET sector contributed to the review and we want to particularly recognise the contributions of current and former VET students and educators who shared their experience with us which was equally important in designing and drafting the review report and recommendations. There were a number of key themes raised in the review, issues associated with awareness and understanding of the disability standards across all sectors including amongst students, families, carers and educators. Another theme was that there was an onus on parents and students to understand and navigate the system across all education systems which can be difficult and challenging particularly if an educator or provider is not proactive in assisting. There’s a need to strengthen the knowledge and capability of educators and providers to implement the standards. That includes efforts to build greater awareness and understanding of legal obligations and more information on how to implement the standards and reasonable adjustments associated with them. There were some specific issues that came out about consultations in relation to VET and some of those things included awareness of the standards being quite low across the board for students and learners as well as the educators and providers. The transition between school and VET was identified as difficult to navigate for students with disability particularly when it came to adjusting to new settings and developing confidence for the first time to advocate for themselves. VET workforce capability was raised including by those within the sector with calls for more training to better support educators in building their capability to implement the standards. There’s concern including from within the sector that inherent course requirements or the requirements of industry may sometimes be used to exclude students with disability and the need for students with disability need to be factored into the beginning of course design processes rather than being applied retrospectively. That’s what we heard during the review. Just to finish, the next steps for us we’re approaching the end of the review, we have to provide a report to our Minister by the end of 2020. It’s expected that we’ll be providing that report to State and Territory Ministers for Education and Skills for their consideration in early 2021. That’s it for me, back to you Kat.

KATERINA: Thanks so much. We’ll just very quickly run through these last two. As you may be aware, all governments have agreed to a range of priorities for skills reform under a heads of agreement for skills reform and that includes immediate work around quality reforms where we will be looking at strengthening the quality of standards through a process to revise standards for registered training organisations, work to build RTO capacity and capability for continuous improvement and development of a VET workforce quality strategy. I think given the time we’ll skip ahead to the next one around the future opportunities that come out of that work. Consultation on the quality reforms will commence before the end of the year and go through to early to mid next year. There will be online workshops and surveys and essential engagement hubs going to be established to provide a single central place for all stakeholder consultation. I think it might be helpful if we come back through the organisers here to be able to let you know when that will be up and we encourage you to have a look and participate in that process. That reform process as well as the review - am I still there...

AMII: Sorry, guys, time to cut you off.

KATERINA: That’s all right. Sorry. We will provide a really good platform or us to ….

AMII: Ok dokey. Thank you very much, ladies. It’s fantastic to hear what’s going on from a Federal policy level.