**Insights**

**Solid results:**
Continued high absolute levels of satisfaction with, and perceived effectiveness of, the VRQA.

**Gains across the board for RTOs and among Home Educators:**
The RTO sector has shown strong gains in overall satisfaction and operational processes, to the extent that this sector is now similar to schools. Overall satisfaction has increased among Home Educators.

**Evidence of declining satisfaction among schools:**
Early indications of falling satisfaction in 2018 have become more entrenched across some measures, especially those related to communications.

**Awareness increasing:**
Awareness of the VRQA continues to increase among employers, apprentices and trainees.

**Child Safe Standards:**
High levels of engagement among schools – with a resulting decline in reliance on VRQA for guidance.

**Opportunities**

**Continue effective engagement with the RTO sector:**
Good results across the board – build on momentum.

**Targeted communication:**
Given the recent regulatory changes commencing for schools, there is an opportunity for targeted communications regarding compliance.

**Operational responsiveness:**
Previously a very strong aspect, effectively responding to contact from education providers is emerging as an area for focus.

**Look to further understand pockets of dissatisfaction within the schools sector:**
This will enable development of strategies or techniques to address sources of negativity among schools.

**Prompt follow-up communication following Home Education reviews:**
Home educators will be less likely to become anxious about the outcome of their review if follow-up feedback is received in a timely manner.
Introduction
Research Objectives

**KNOWLEDGE**
Client and stakeholder understanding of the VRQA and its functions
The level of client and stakeholder awareness of the VRQA and its functions

**EXPECTATIONS**
Client and stakeholder expectations (including types of support expected and valued)
How clients and stakeholders would like to engage with the VRQA (including types of support expected and valued)

**DELIVERY**
Areas for improvement in VRQA performance in engaging clients and stakeholders
How clients and stakeholders would like to receive communication from the VRQA
Understanding of levels of and shifts in satisfaction amongst clients
Methodology

**Note:** All fieldwork (both qualitative and quantitative) was conducted in Victoria.
The key change for 2019 was the online stakeholder survey

Stakeholders were sent a short (2-3 minute) survey asking them to rate the effectiveness of the VRQA in performing its regulatory function.

Those rating the VRQA as highly effective were asked for their reason for this rating.

Those rating the VRQA anything less than highly effective were asked what the VRQA could do to improve its overall effectiveness.

The online survey concluded by asking stakeholders if they would be willing to participate in a qualitative interview at a subsequent time. Those responding in the affirmative were contacted to arrange a suitable time.

In all, 129 stakeholders were emailed the online survey, and 70 (54%) completed it.
Field Results

**Educational Providers**
- Target: 300
- Interview length: 13 minutes (online)
- Number: n=306

**Apprentices & Trainees**
- Target: 100
- Interview length: 5 minutes (online)
- Number: n=146

**Employers**
- Target: 100
- Interview length: 5 minutes (online)
- Number: n=136

**Home Educators**
- Target: 300
- Interview length: 7 minutes (online)
- Number: n=424

**Stakeholders**
- Target: N/A
- Interview length: 2 minutes (online)
- Number: n=70

Additional Information:
- 9 education stakeholders: in-depth interviews
- 15 education providers: in-depth interviews
- 10 apprentice and trainee stakeholders: in-depth interviews
- 1 home education stakeholder: in-depth interview
- 11 home education parents: in-depth interviews
The education provider survey was completed by schools and RTOs in fairly even proportions.

*Base: Education Providers (n=306); Employers (n=136); Apprentices/Trainees (n=146); Home Educators (n=424)*
Satisfaction and assessment of effectiveness
Overall Satisfaction with the VRQA has plateaued among education providers, with improvements evident amongst home educators.

Most stakeholders consider VRQA to be an effective regulator.

%EPS10: Overall, how satisfied are you with the VRQA and its services over the last 12 months? **Base:** n=306

%HE14: Overall, how satisfied are you with the VRQA and its services over the last 12 months? **Base:** n=424

%STK1: Thinking about how effective the VRQA has been in performing its regulatory function, would you rate the VRQA as being… **Base:** n=70
High levels of satisfaction with the VRQA across all sectors

While low, at 5%, dissatisfaction among schools has doubled since 2018 (2.4%)

Reasons for dissatisfaction from schools often related to perceived inconsistencies.

The VRQA has become very heavy handed towards schools in implementing the new regulations. School

When documentation is reviewed by different people, they often request different things which feels like the goal posts keep moving. School

Inconsistent approach to regulation, poor follow up from lodged queries, lack of transparency, threat based approach. School

Most regulatory requirements do not result in better education. Perhaps if staff actually visited people and places in the sector. One size does not fit all. Community RTO

We waited months to hear back about whether we were successful, and there was no end of bureaucratic nonsense about why we had to wait so long. Home Educator

Satisfied clients noted promptness and ease.

VRQA is a responsive and consistent organisation. It has a very difficult role and conducts itself with professionalism and transparency. School

Excellent communication that is well informed about the needs of schools. School

VRQA has been forthcoming with information I require in my role. They have been supportive and clear of what is expected of our organisation. RTO

After a recent site audit a number of areas required improvement, I found all staff that I dealt with regarding the follow up requirements to be respectful and fair. RTO

My enquiries are always answered and are very helpful in many ways. Always ready to help in any circumstances. Home Educator

EPS10B: What is the main reason for your [satisfaction/dissatisfaction]? Base: n=306
HE14: Overall, how satisfied are you with the VRQA and its services over the last 12 months? Base: n=424
Schools and RTOs perceive VRQA as an effective regulator

Compared to 2018, there are more discontented schools and fewer discontented RTOs

The VRQA team engaged well with us and has gone to lengths to understand specific items for our schools. **School**

The people we deal with are very professional and understanding. **RTO**

There is no sense of working together to improve things in schools, just the overhanging threat of if your school is not-compliant we can close you down. **School**

lack of detailed information about how to meet regulatory changes, and the fact that I rarely speak to or receive correspondence from the same person twice. **School**

EPS9: Thinking about how effective the VRQA has been in performing its regulatory function, would you rate the VRQA as being… **Base**: n=306

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Education providers – net effective</th>
<th>Education providers – net NOT effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>99% 96% 95% 94%</td>
<td>8% 7% 6% 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTOs</td>
<td>92% 93% 95%</td>
<td>1% 4% 7% 2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EPS8: Thinking about VRQA’s regulatory work, to what extent do you agree with the following?  **Base: n=306**

The role of the VRQA continues to be valued by education providers

The RTO sector is reporting consistently higher ratings than in 2018, a result echoed across many of the measures in 2019.

- **The VRQA contributes to the quality of Victoria’s education and training sector**
  - School: 87%
  - RTO: 87%
  - 2018 comparison: 85%

- **The VRQA engages appropriately with the regulated community**
  - School: 84%
  - RTO: 84%
  - 2018 comparison: 80%

- **The VRQA improves the quality of VET outcomes in Victoria**
  - RTO: 85%
  - 2018 comparison: 83%

- **The VRQA promotes and encourages continuous improvement of registered training organisations**
  - RTO: 86%
  - 2018 comparison: 89%
The priority levers for improving perceived effectiveness are different across RTOs and Schools

Communication is key for RTOs. Transparency and consistency is important for schools.

RTOs

- Ongoing communication is key for RTOs
- 95% Net effectiveness

Schools

- Transparency and consistency is important for schools
- 94% Net effectiveness

The priority levers for improving perceived effectiveness are different across RTOs and Schools.

Communication is key for RTOs. Transparency and consistency is important for schools.
They deliver a strong and consistent regulatory function
- Stakeholder, schools sector

**STK 2:** Why do you think the VRQA is highly effective?
Base: Stakeholders who rated VRQA as highly effective (n=27)
What stakeholders think VRQA could do to improve its overall effectiveness

“More contemporary approach to its regulatory activity - not just compliance focus

Education Stakeholder

STK 3: What could the VRQA do to improve its overall effectiveness?
Base: Stakeholders who rated VRQA less than highly effective (n=39)
VRQA performance and processes
Education providers continue to give solid ratings of VRQA performance

The gap between schools and RTOs observed previously has narrowed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Fully agree</th>
<th>Mostly agree</th>
<th>Partially agree</th>
<th>Do not agree at all</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The VRQA has been open and transparent</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The VRQA has been responsive</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The VRQA has been fair and consistent</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The VRQA has provided ongoing communication</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The VRQA has understood your business</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The VRQA has supported the interest of consumers (parents and students)</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The VRQA has provided proportionate regulation</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages are subject to rounding, and hence nominal values do not necessarily sum to 100%

EPS7: In the past 12 months, to what extent do you agree that the VRQA’s performance aligned with each of the following?
Base: All (n=306)
Some ratings of VRQA’s performance have plateaued while others have declined since 2017.

‘Responsiveness’, ‘Ongoing Communication’ and ‘Proportionate Regulation’ all exhibited falls.

**EPS7:** In the past 12 months, to what extent do you agree that the VRQA’s performance aligned with each of the following?

*Base: All (n=306)*
Agreement remains high that VRQA operational processes are straightforward

Convergence of ratings across RTOs and schools over time

- Regulatory requirements are clearly stated: 80% (School), 83% (RTO), 78% (2018 comparison)
- VRQA forms are clear and easy to understand: 87% (School), 87% (RTO), 83% (2018 comparison)
- Procedures are easy to understand and follow: 87% (School), 83% (RTO), 78% (2018 comparison)
- Other requirements including evidence are clearly stated: 82% (School), 75% (RTO), 78% (2018 comparison)
Perceptions of customer service levels remain robust

Some erosion in ratings from schools, and gains across RTOs

- Providing timely information about regulatory changes/general directions:
  - 2018: School 87%, RTO 74%
  - 2019: School 81%, RTO 81%

- Providing sufficient contact information so that I can contact VRQA:
  - 2018: School 84%, RTO 75%
  - 2019: School 79%, RTO 77%

- Providing timely, quality advice about my sector to my organisation:
  - 2018: School 80%, RTO 76%
  - 2019: School 76%, RTO 76%

- Engaging effectively with stakeholders in the regulation of the sector:
  - 2018: School 69%, RTO 62%
  - 2019: School 73%, RTO 66%

EPSS: Please rate the VRQA’s performance on each of the following items…
Base: All (n=306)
Poor ratings stem mainly from lack of response to communication from education providers, as well as lack of pro-active communication about changes.

| Have no contact from the VRQA from re registration audit to the next. | **RTO** |
| Myself and my auditor have contacted VRQA a number of times to get issues clarified only to have no one return phone calls or emails. | **RTO** |
| I have emailed and left messages and not got responses. I have had to make follow up phone calls multiple times to get a response from VRQA. There is a poor response rate to emails I have sent through - either a number of weeks or not a response. | **RTO** |

| Role out of changes to guidelines was late, was poorly advertised and communicated. VRQA Staff were unaware of regulations and how to interpret or implement them. VRQA staff are unlikely to return phone calls or follow up queries lodged by email... A general contact number is given, so its difficult to call for a certain staff member. There is no engagement of stakeholders. | **School** |

| The VRQA failed to provide any information sessions prior to the rollout of the updated Minimum Standards for School Registration that would have assisted schools in implementing the new standards. | **School** |

**Responsiveness**  **Proactivity**
Engaging with the Employers, Apprentices and Trainees
Levels of awareness of the VRQA across the VET sector have doubled since 2017

51% of employers

39% of A/T

ATE1: Are you aware of the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) and the role it plays? Base: Employers (n=136); A&Ts (n=146)
Email is the preferred mode of contact across all cohorts

Apprentices are more open to being contacted via SMS or phone

ATE9: If VRQA was to get in touch with you, what are your preferred methods of communication for them to use? Base: Employers (n=170) / A&T (n=172)
Engaging with Education Providers
The VRQA website remains the go-to resource for schools

Fewer schools agree that the website clearly explains regulatory requirements and is easy to navigate compared to 2018.

- The VRQA website clearly explains regulatory requirements for my organisation: 2019: 82%, 2018: 92%
- I can easily find what I am looking for on the VRQA website: 2019: 76%, 2018: 83%
- All the information I need is on the VRQA website: 2019: 80%, 2018: 81%

EPS2A: Which of the following VRQA publications/communications have you accessed/used in the past 12 months?
EPS3: Thinking about the VRQA website, to what extent do you agree with each of the following statements? Base: All (n=161)
Education providers as well as stakeholders agree that VRQA events keep them up to date

Agreement amongst RTOs has increased considerably since 2017

They do provide forums, so they provide a sort of a Q&A or a presentation ... it's really good because we can openly ask questions and it's in a forum where every interested party can be there. *Education Stakeholder*

The breakfast is where some of the significant stakeholders can be there and also talk to others, but also address concerns directly to the VRQA, so it's beyond just student exchange. *Education Stakeholder*

**EPS4**: To what extent do you agree that VRQA events (e.g. seminars, information briefings or workshops) keep you up to date with the information you need for your operations in the sector? **Base**: All (n=306)
The website and e-News present the greatest opportunity for further assisting education providers, due to their high usage levels.

**EPS2A:** Which of the following VRQA publications/communications have you accessed/used in the past 12 months? **Base:** All (n=306)

**EPS2B:** How helpful have you found the following VRQA publication/communication?
High levels of engagement and participation with child safe standards continue

Fewer schools require further support compared with 2018

9 out of 10 schools agree:
- Governing body actively engaged with the CSS
- Our school community is actively engaged in the CSS
- CSS helped highlight the need for a culture of child safety at our school
- The materials and support from the VRQA have been helpful for our school in adopting the Child Safe Standards

Only 1 in 4 schools require further help or support from VRQA (40% in 2018)

EPS 12: Thinking about VRQA’s work on the Child Safe Standards, to what extent do you agree with the following? 
**Base:** Schools only (per Q1) (n=161)
Opportunities for VRQA to provide further practical support

Most schools that require further support with the CSS want more exemplar material

- Continued updates of changes and recommendations of how to implement these changes
- Reminders and enough time to complete any annual compliance tasks
- Changing culture is challenging and some examples of how other schools successfully navigated this would be helpful. We are particularly interested in creating a genuine student voice in the context of Child Safety
- Continue with exemplar work being communicated - particularly that which demonstrates continuous improvement
- Ongoing contextualised materials and fact sheets, we rely on the CCYP as there is basically nothing contextualised to 16-18 year olds in a non-school environment and RTO available through the VRQA

Communication  Flexibility  Exemplar models
EPS 14: Which of the following VRQA resources have been helpful for your school in the implementation of the Child Safe Standards?

**Base:** Those who at least partially agreed that the materials and support from the VRQA have been helpful for their school in adopting the Child Safe Standards (Q12b = 1-3) (n=180)

**Compared to 2018, even more schools found the CSS website helpful**

- **Child safe standards website**
  - 2019: 77%
  - 2018: 59%

- **Downloadable fact sheets and tip sheets**
  - 2019: 16%
  - 2018: 7%

- **Video resources**
  - 2019: 16%
  - 2018: 7%

- **VRQA discussion tools**
  - 2019: 7%
  - 2018: 7%


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I think the first thing is clarity, particularly when it comes to some guidelines... That would help us a lot and save us a lot of time because it’s hard to manage the unknown.

Create video’s demonstrating best practice in the Child Protection Space. Current resources are dated now.

The fact sheets work well.
Minimum Standards
Most schools agree that the requirements to comply with the minimum standards are clear and consistent – with seven in ten stating that they do not require further help.

The requirements, including evidence required, to comply with the Minimum Standards are clear and consistent.

7 out of 10 do not require further help or support to comply with the minimum standards.
EPS 21 What kind of further support does your school/organisation require from the VRQA in relation to the Minimum Standards? Base: Have not fully agreed that they need no further support (EPS 20B = 2, 3, 4)

Those requiring further support with the minimum standards are seeking direct interaction

Extra support for schools in unpacking the governance requirement, that would be very helpful for the independent sector more clarity about the governance so that they know how to keep all agreements at arms length, how to make sure that governance of both entities are separate. School

Consistency. For examples I have policies that have been approved by the regulator 6 times in the last few years, yet on review those policies were deemed not to comply. We need the VRQA to be consistent and transparent. School

Not all schools have compliance officers and we should be able to provide evidence and ensure compliance without the need for a compliance officer who has a legal background and can therefore write materials with the correct language. School
Home educators
VRQA registration processes were well received by most Home Educators

At least a quarter of Home Educators did not find preparing the learning plan easy

Understanding what was involved in the application process
- 91% Very easy

Completing the application form
- 93% Very easy

Responding to VRQA requests for more information
- 93% Very easy

Preparing a learning plan
- NET 73%

Completing the VRQA learning plan template
- 81% Very easy

"It was overwhelming needing to go through this process as I wasn’t very clear on the best way to approach it. I did think it was good that there were several options available to parents on how to show the learning plans."

HE2: How did you find the following VRQA processes?
Base: n=200
Review process: Most home educators found the review process easy

Approximately 1 in 8 (12%) were involved in a home schooling review this year

- Understanding what was involved in the review process: 76%
- Accessing information and support for the review: 82%
- Compiling evidence for the review: 88%
- Working with the VRQA reviewer: 93%

HE4: Did you participate in a VRQA home schooling review this year? Base: n=424
HE5: How did you find the following VRQA review processes? Base: n=50
Review process: VRQA resources were utilised extensively during the process

The VRQA website was a key support during the review process

VRQA resources

- VRQA website 74%
- VRQA home schooling team 48%
- VRQA information session 26%

Other home education networks

- Home education network 52%
- Other home education support group 18%
- Victorian Home Education Advisory Committee 6%

HE6: Where did you go to for support or information through the review process? Base: n=50

Our only contact with team has been at an Info session about the review process. We were relieved and impressed by the tone of the presentation & the process described - it was relaxed and friendly… the process for review seemed sensible to us.

Very helpful and informative website.

Clear information provided. Especially the website. Easily accessible learning guidelines.

We went to the info session to get a 'feel' for the VRQA and the new review process and were pleasantly surprised that their attitudes and processes embraced a wide variety of learning approaches - this made us feel relieved and excited about our decision to home school our daughter.
Review process: before and after cases

The path from anxiety to confidence is built on receiving information and being heard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why anxious before review</th>
<th>Why confident after review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We were unsure of how the VRQA would feel about our home education practices.</td>
<td>Our VRQA reviewer was excellent &amp; very helpful &amp; supportive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My husband and I were under some stress and was just bad timing ... You just don't want to be the person that misses something by accident or gets it wrong.</td>
<td>It was good to see a record of just how much and the many areas the child learns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wasn't sure how in-depth the report for the review needed to be and I felt worried about being judged.</td>
<td>Because the reviewer clarified that I had covered all of the learning areas well in our report and I now know what format to provide information in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Review Process: High ratings maintained for flexibility and provision of information during the interaction

**Understanding and accommodating your home education approach or family circumstances**

- **91%**

**Providing you with clear information of what is required at review**

- **80%**

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Thanks to VRQA for their support & understanding.

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[The VRQA Officer] answered all my questions and was so easy to work with. It was a very pleasant experience and I tell others not to worry or panic just talk to the officer who’s doing your review and talk to them and they will make you feel very at ease and help you with what information to provide.

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We felt we could continue with our own relaxed/creative/play based unschooling approach to her learning and that we could easily document and justify this through the review process.

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HE9: Please rate the VRQA’s performance on each of the following items. Base: n=50
When parents do not receive prompt contact following a review, they can become anxious about their review outcome.

I'm not sure if it is a problem with reviews being lost in an email inbox or whether there are not enough staff working through the reviews, but some families (ours included) have waited several months to hear back about our reviews. Ours was submitted early June. After receiving an acknowledgement email I haven't heard anything back.

After submission, I did not receive any feedback about the outcome of my review, so after 2 months of patiently waiting, I called my reviewer. The reviewer… said I had passed and they did not seem to know why we were not informed of the decision sooner. Usually VRQA has been very prompt but not so much in this instance.

When I wrote asking about clarifying details, my emails went unanswered. I had to phone them numerous times. Once I submitted the document, it was not formally acknowledged by the person assigned to me. Then the waiting began. No updates, no indication of when we could expect to hear the outcome. … Eventually we were sent the letter saying we were successful…

Improving timeframe would be helpful

We didn’t hear back after our review, which was in May this year. We assume all is well but it is a bit worrying for us.

It is not absolutely clear what is required in the review. Obviously I overworked it, but because it wasn't clear, I gave you everything I had to make sure we passed. If you don't want families giving you 42 pages to read (maybe you did) then maybe a really simple sheet that says…. 1. What type of style of home schooling (classical, unschooling, eclectic, unit studies, school based, distance ed etc) 2. Upon selection of this method, it should have different ways to review…

Need for more prompt feedback or status updates following review

Clearer guidance in terms depth and breadth of submissions required
Very high ratings of VRQA performance, with an opportunity to enhance support materials

Staff who are courteous and helpful: 92%
Information about how to meet the requirements of registration: 89%
Guidance and support materials: 78%
Sufficient contact information: 89%

HE12: Please rate the VRQA’s performance in providing …
Base: n=424
Primary levers for improving satisfaction among home educators

**HE14:** Overall, how satisfied are you with the VRQA and its services over the last 12 months? **Base:** n=424

**NET satisfaction:** 82%

- **Staff who are courteous and helpful**
  - Very helpful and easy to get in contact with when needed. Great knowledge of homeschooleding and able to answer any questions I had.
  - Staff involved were extremely friendly, helpful and accommodating
  - Phone staff were knowledgeable, helpful and polite and easy to contact.
  - Personal contact helpful when encountering difficulty. Answers I received reduced some unnecessary pressure. Also at the info session I felt they were there to help, not just be policemen.
  - I have never had a problem with contacting them or getting the information I need.

- **Guidance and support materials**
  - Information about how to meet the requirements of registration
    - Easy, straightforward contact and re-registration process and the phone staff are always very helpful and informative.
    - It was made clear what was required for registration.
    - Registration has been easy and prompt in the past.. I think the current system of reviews is reasonable and am grateful.
    - They can't even check their own system before giving us conflicting information.

- **Sufficient contact information so that I can contact them**

- **Information about how to apply, how to fill out the template and how to make sure all key learning areas were covered adequately. The information was easy to access and easy to understand. The example templates were very handy.**

- **Web site not easy to find out information.**

- **The information and templates online were sufficient for us to prepare the required materials.**

- **Personal contact helpful when encountering difficulty. Answers I received reduced some unnecessary pressure. Also at the info session I felt they were there to help, not just be policemen.**

- **Very helpful and easy to get in contact with when needed. Great knowledge of homeschooleding and able to answer any questions I had.**

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