



Management Response to the Vanuatu Education and Skills

Design Stage 1 – High Level Modality Review

Australia is a long-term partner and supporter of education and training in Vanuatu. This has ranged across early childhood care and education, primary education and skills/technical and vocational education and training. This sector remains a core priority for Australia's development cooperation with Vanuatu. Australia's International Development Policy recognises the centrality of education and training for every nation's ongoing development, and its Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) puts increased emphasis on measuring Australia's contribution to improved learning outcomes, skills training and positive policy change in the sector.

Two significant investments comprise the majority of Australia's current support to Vanuatu's education and skills sectors: the **Vanuatu Skills Partnership (VSP)** and the **Vanuatu Australia Education Support Program (VAESP)**, which is inclusive of Australia Awards Vanuatu. The programs are separate, with unique scope and focus: VAESP focuses on working within the formal education sector to support the Ministry of Education and Training to improve quality, access and management in the early years of education to improve education delivery in schools, improve student access and learning outcomes and system effectiveness; VSP focuses on skills development for employment and entrepreneurship and the strengthening of links between the training and productive sectors for inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and supporting developmental leadership and good governance to drive service delivery reform. Managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) from the Australian High Commission in Port Vila, both programs conclude in 2026, VAESP in December and VSP in January. DFAT has therefore sought to carry out a design of the next phases simultaneously, including a high-level modality review as the first stage of the design.

In 2024, VAESP and VSP were independently reviewed for DFAT. This review was envisaged in both program designs, but DFAT sought to pivot to a High-Level Modality Review to synthesise the strengths and challenges in VSP and VAESP and consider the merits of maintaining the status-quo of separate skills and basic education programs, or a new, combined investment commencing 2026.

DFAT welcomes the High-Level Modality Review. We note the Review's identification of strengths and issues in both programs including the need to balance national and sub-national work, aligned to Vanuatu's commitment to decentralisation and the priority Government of Vanuatu places on the provincial level; and a combination of local leadership with an effective support contractor model that has enabled strong outcomes while more conventional managing contractor structures have been less effective.

DFAT accepts the recommendation put forward in the High-Level Modality Review Report. The full Review recommendation and management response is provided in the table below.



Priority Recommendation

Review Recommendation	Response	Explanation	Action Plan	Indicative Timeline
The next phase of Australian support to education and skills in Vanuatu be developed as a significant, integrated investment design document which incorporates all the components (education, skills and scholarships). This will deliver efficiencies, enable the expansion of the support contractor approach, and will suit a significant investment which is wholly focused within a single sector.	Agree	<p>This approach is recommended based on the judgement that a combined multi-component investment supported by a contractor will deliver the greatest gains in both efficiency and effectiveness, without significant additional risk. Experience has shown that Post’s role has been instrumental in enabling the support contractor model to develop and become established. Therefore, the design must also address the required resources within DFAT to ensure that Post can provide the essential strategic and management input which will enable the greatest achievement of investment outcomes.</p> <p>With details to be determined and confirmed through the design process, the pillars or components are likely to include targeted investments in: skills, basic education (including infrastructure), and scholarships. The modality will likely include use of a direct funding arrangement with the Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training. The program logic should explicitly feature ‘ways of working’ so that local developmental leadership, partnership, inclusion, and adaptive management are resourced appropriately and given sufficient priority.</p>	<p>The design team will design (in 2025) for a single investment that will use a support contractor modality that operates in support of local leadership.</p> <p>DFAT, supported by its Education and Skills Strategic Adviser, will manage this design process in-line with DFAT requirements and with the aim to better align Australia’s support with local policy settings – looking to increase impact and efficiency, drawing from respective gains to date and lessons learned to enable a more strategic, ‘whole-of-system’ approach.</p>	Ongoing, and design to be completed by July 2025. Implementation to commence 2026.

