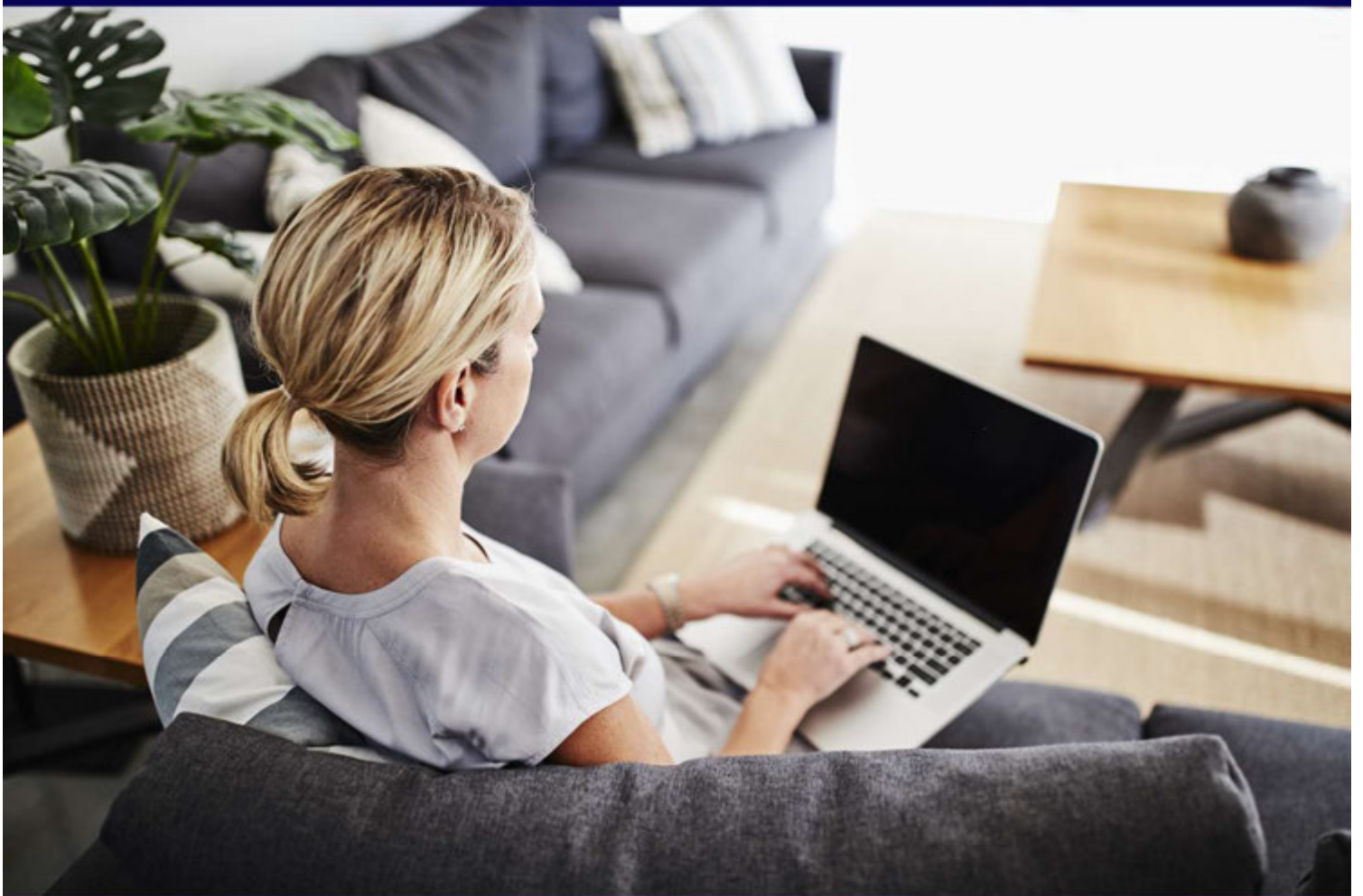


Submission | National Skills Passport

FOR PUBLICATION

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SEEK welcomes the Government's consultation on a business case for a National Skills Passport. This early consultation provides the opportunity to look at existing elements of the credential passport system which work well, what could be improved, and what requires more detailed policy development and potential IT infrastructure investment from government.

SEEK places more people in jobs in Australia than any other organisation – accounting for a third of all job placements across the breadth of the labour market. Working with millions of jobseekers and hundreds of thousands of employers every year, as well as scores of learners and education and training providers, we know the verification and portability of credentials is crucial to ensuring the efficient matching of individuals with opportunities – whether that be in work or study.

This is the key problem that the Treasurer, Minister for Education and Minister for Skills and Training articulated when they announced a business case to look at the potential benefits, scope and outcomes of a National Skills Passport:

The National Skills Passport has the potential to make it easier for employees to demonstrate their skills, change jobs and upskill, while making it simpler for employers to hire new staff with the skills and qualifications they need.¹

While we agree with this goal, specialist credential passport platforms are already verifying credentials at scale across the Australian labour market and education sector. At SEEK, we have been providing a free verified credential passport for jobseekers and employers in the Australian labour market for over six years. This is offered through Certsy which verifies a range of credentials valued by employers and helps jobseekers to stand out in the recruitment process (Certisy will soon be re-named SEEK Pass).

- Over 2.5 million Australian jobseekers – or 17 percent of the Australian labour market – have used Certsy to verify over five million credentials such as identity, work rights, occupational licenses, professional registrations, education and training qualifications. This shows jobseekers trust specialist credential passports with their data and value the service in supporting their job search.
- Over 40% of job applications on SEEK now have at least one verified credential. This helps jobseekers stand out to the hundreds of thousands of employers using SEEK. And it works – job seekers with at least three verified credentials are 25% more likely to be shortlisted than unverified jobseekers.
- Over 80% of surveyed employers say that verified credentials embedded in their hiring workflows helps their hiring process.

One of the essential features of a successful specialist credential passport is that it be embedded in the hiring processes and workforce management workflows of employers, or the admissions process of education and training institutions. Specialist credential passports providers must also have deep expertise, experience and resources for ongoing development of the user experience layer of a credential passport.

SEEK is not the only employment platform working in this space; we are one of a number of specialist credential passports serving all, or specific parts of, the labour market – LinkedIn's profiles also have the ability to verify credentials.²

Our view is that there is no need for a 'National Skills Passport' – that is, for a government developed and maintained passport – because this role is already being delivered well by existing specialist credential passports which are embedded into the hiring processes of employers. It would be more useful instead to start to refer to a high functioning credential passport system, in which government leverages and further enables the existing specialist credential passports rather than trying to duplicate them.

The value that government can add to the system is by undertaking policy development work and IT infrastructure development that underpins future innovations and improvements in specialist credential passports. The role for government is therefore to act as an enabler of the system by setting standards and policy that allows all other players in the system – from education and training providers, specialist credential passports, employers and jobseekers / learners – to interact effectively and efficiently.

¹ <https://ministers.education.gov.au/chalmers/national-skills-passport>

² LinkedIn partner with Persona to provide the verification service in Australia. In the US & Canada, LinkedIn partners with a credential passport player called CLEAR that also serves various other use cases. Other specialist credential passports can be found at **Attachment A**.

Existing specialist credential passports already serve the labour market well

SEEK knows the efficient matching of jobseekers with opportunities is one of the key drivers of an effective and productive labour market. A key underpinning of efficiently matching labour supply with demand is the ability for employers to understand and trust the claims made by jobseekers, and for jobseekers to be able to easily highlight their suitability for a role. One important way jobseekers do this is by providing relevant credentials in their CV or job application. This is similar to a prospective student demonstrating their credentials in an admissions process for an education and training institution.

For this reason, SEEK has been providing a free verified credential passport for jobseekers and employers in the Australian labour market for over six years through Certsy (soon to be re-named as SEEK Pass). Certsy verifies an ever-expanding range of credentials valued by employers that help jobseekers stand out in the recruitment process, including:

- Identity
- Work rights
- Educational Qualifications
 - Higher education
 - Vocational education & training
- Licences & Registrations
 - Access to a vehicle
 - Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) registration
 - Construction induction card
 - Driver's licence
 - First aid accreditation
 - Food safety accreditation
 - Forklift licence
 - Heavy vehicle licence
 - High risk work licences (various)
 - Manual handling accreditation
 - Responsible service of alcohol
- Immunisations
 - COVID-19 vaccination
- Background Checks
 - Recent police check / Nationally Coordinated Criminal History Check (NCCHC)
 - Working with children / vulnerable persons

When using Certsy, jobseekers are in full control of their data and how and when it's used. Over 13 million jobseekers in the Australian labour market have a SEEK profile. These jobseekers can elect to have Certsy verify their credentials for free. In Australia over 2.5 million jobseekers have already used Certsy to verify over five million credentials. This shows jobseekers trust specialist credential passports with their data and value the service in supporting their job search.

These verified credentials are then highlighted to prospective employers through an integrated application process – in fact, 40% of applications on SEEK now have at least one verified credential on the jobseeker's SEEK profile. This helps them to stand out to the hundreds of thousands of employers using SEEK. We know this is valued by employers because jobseekers with at least three verified credentials are 25% more likely to be shortlisted than unverified candidates. Furthermore, over 80% of employers surveyed say that these verified credentials help their hiring process.

Certsy is just one of a number of specialist credential passports that serve the Australian labour market, either as a whole, or for specific industries or use cases. Another example operating at scale is LinkedIn Profiles, that has the ability to verify credentials³ (see **Attachment B** for examples of other credential passports). All these specialist credential passports are integrated – albeit in different ways – into the systems and processes employers rely on to manage their recruitment and workforce compliance.

Specialist credential passport platforms have deep expertise, experience, focus and resources to develop and innovate a modern and convenient user experience. Technology and expectations evolve, so this requires ongoing innovation and a high level of investment, both upfront and throughout the life of the product. There are important security and privacy considerations, around which robust processes need to be embedded.

Importantly, users will also want a choice of passports so they can pick the one that best suits their needs in terms of credential range, privacy, security, user experience, and integrations into other systems. Success is less about specific features and more about how valuable it is in helping job seekers to stand out on their merits and helping employers to hire confidently and efficiently.

The role of government

Government is the only player in the system that can set standards, ensure data consistency and build the underpinning infrastructure for the credential passport system

The value that government can add to the system is by undertaking policy development work and IT infrastructure development that underpins future innovations and improvements in specialist credential passports. The role for government is therefore to act as an enabler of the system by setting standards, policy and allowing all other players in the system – from education and training providers, specialist credential passports, employers and jobseekers / learners – to interact effectively and efficiently.

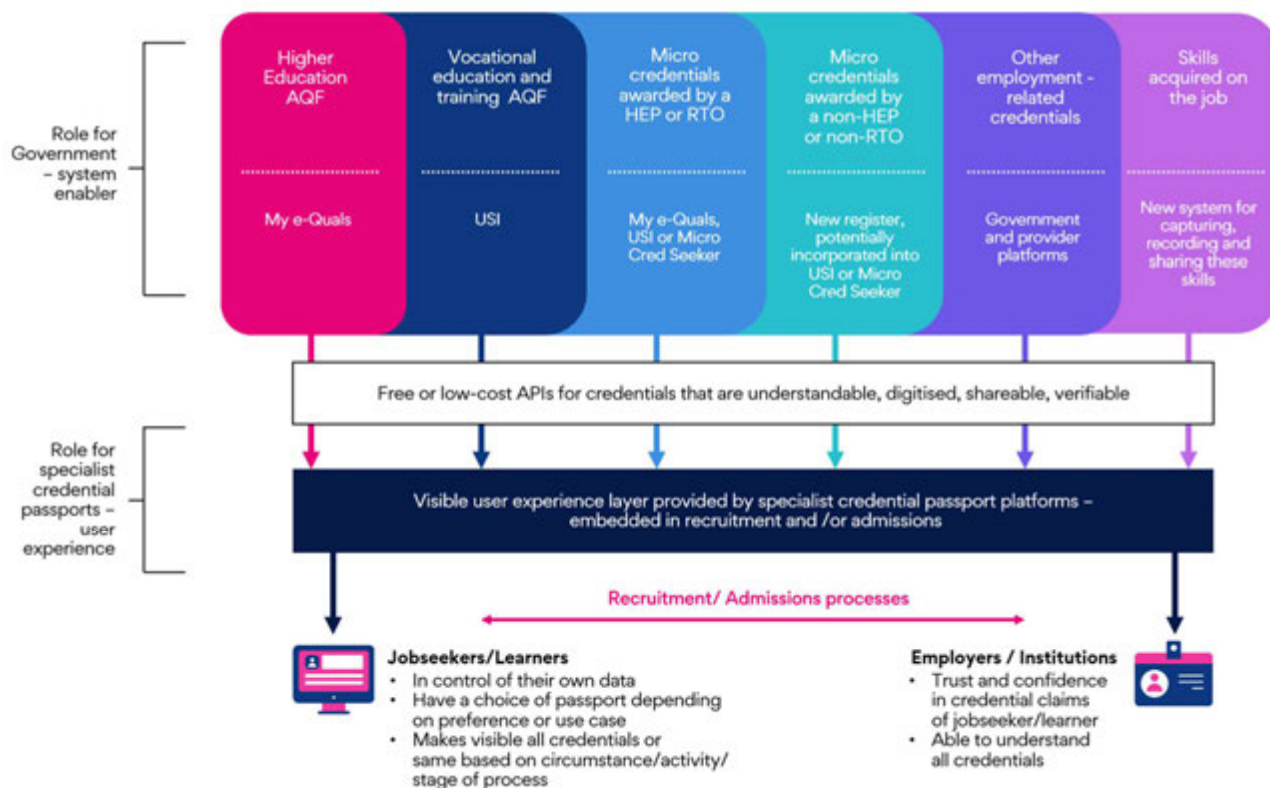
Our view is that there is no need for a 'National Skills Passport' – that is, a government developed and maintained passport – because this role is already being delivered well by existing specialist credential passports. It would be more useful instead to start to refer to a high functioning credential passport system, in which rather than trying to duplicate specialist credential passports, government should instead leverage and further enable.

This would allow the finite resources of government to be directed away from the area of the system that is well served by specialist credential passports (the user experience that is embedded in employers' and institutions' workflows), towards the underpinning elements that enable the education and training system and the labour market to work most efficiently. Some of the enabling infrastructure underpinning the credential passport system already exists, however more needs to be done in this space.

The following diagram depicts the proposed future state of a high functioning credential passport system.

³ LinkedIn partner with Persona to provide their verification service in Australia. In the US LinkedIn has its own credential passport called CLEAR.

Figure 1: Proposed future state – a high functioning credential passport system



The value-adding work that government could do

The following section presents suggestions for how government should focus its efforts to underpin a high functioning credential passport system.

1. Formal qualifications from a Higher Education Provider (HEP)

The My e-Equals platform (<https://www.myequals.edu.au/>) provides sound enabling infrastructure for Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) accredited qualifications awarded by universities. However, government could work with My e-Equals to:

- Digitise all credentials, not just those conferred after 2017 when it commenced operating.
- Expand the platform to include non-university HEPs
- Support a process to standardise and structure the data in a common and API-friendly way – to make it more easily understood and comparable across different institutions, rather than just providing access to PDF documents. This should be freely available to give graduates maximum value from their qualification, not monetised like the forthcoming Graduate Verification Service
- Set standardised data arrangements to break down transcripts and course titles to the constitute skills a learner has gained through their studies.

2. Formal qualifications from a Registered Training Organisation (RTO)

The Unique Student Identifier (USI) platform (<https://www.usi.gov.au/>) also provides solid underpinning infrastructure for AQF qualifications awarded by RTOs. However, government could improve the utility of the platform by:

- Digitising all VET qualifications, not just those awarded after 2015
- Reduce delays in reporting new qualifications from some providers. This ensures newly qualified people who want to stand out with these skills can be verified at the most relevant time.
- Build an API to the USI site so organisations do not have to manually query the portal. This would greatly improve efficiency.

3. Micro credentials

The key challenge with micro credentials in the labour market, and in education and training settings, is employers and jobseekers / learners being able to understand what the micro credential means and trust its bona fides. Employers and jobseekers / learners alike want credential passports to include micro credentials and other work-related credentials.

SEEK sees the role for government as enabling a more structured market for micro credentials. This means setting the policy, standards and protocols that help underpin trust in micro credentials. Government is the only organisation that can play this role.

A number of previous reviews, reports and initiatives highlight some of the policy work to be done by government in this space – and the National Micro Credential Framework provides a solid foundation on which to build. For all micro credentials, some of this work includes communicating and gaining broad agreement and buy-in from stakeholders on the following:⁴

- A definition of a micro credential that can be applied across micro credentials awarded by a HEP, RTO and a non-HEP / non-RTO
- An agreed framework for levels of mastery of micro credentials, e.g. the Dreyfus Model
- An agreed framework of 'volume of learning', e.g. bands of hours

For non-HEP / non-RTO micro credentials, additional work needs to be progressed regarding:

- Setting up the frameworks, standards and systems for a structured (not regulated) market for credentials awarded by these organisations. This could be via a registration process that is responsive so as not to dampen the innovation and dynamism of this part of the system.

4. Other employment-related credentials

There are a range of other employment-related credentials that support the efficient matching of labour supply with demand. These include:

- Working rights
- General purpose credentials, e.g. identity, driver's licence, access to a vehicle
- Industry or occupational licences, e.g. heavy vehicle, construction induction, high risk work, responsible service of alcohol, responsible conduct of gambling, electrical, plumbing, carpentry
- Occupational registrations and screening, e.g. NDIS worker check, working with children / vulnerable people, AHPRA, engineering, legal, teachers, nationally coordinated criminal history check (NCCHC)

⁴ A lot of policy work has already been done as part of the National Micro-Credentials Framework (that is currently being reviewed). The next phase of work would be to review, assess and implement the findings from the review that align with government policy.

- Professional associations, e.g. Chartered Accountants, CPA, Institute of Public Accountants, Australian Computer Society, Engineers Australia, Australian Institute of Architects.

These credentials are largely provided by government agencies, including regulators, but also by professional associations. All have slightly different problems to be solved. **Attachment B** outlines these issues and suggests actions government can take to improve their utility in the labour market. For example:

- by adding historical VET qualifications into USI (i.e. issued prior to 2015), moving to real-time reporting of qualifications and providing an API link to the USI platform so users don't have to manually interrogate the portal.
- Expand access to the NDIS Worker Screening Database to allow non-NDIS-providers access via the existing API.
- For professional and trade licences (administered by state and territories and professional bodies) increase the interoperability and consistency of the credential life cycle – that is how a credential gets issued, is maintained, is renewed, when it's suspended and / or expires – across states and territories.

5. Skills acquired on the job

Government should give consideration to developing a framework, standards and system that allows for employees and/or jobseekers to highlight the skills they acquire on the job beyond formal requirements of training (e.g. as part of a traineeship or apprenticeship).

A similar approach could be adopted where an employer endorses a trainee or apprentice is competent in a particular skill. Providers of platforms that capture and report workplace evidence already exist in this space for formal vocational training, e.g. Exemplar Profiling, My Profiling and Skills Tracker.

6. Other credentials

There are three other credentials that could also be considered in this context.

First, the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR), subject grades, and other aspects of Senior Secondary Certificate of Education qualifications. Second, a jobseekers' prior experience, where relevant skills have been applied. Finally, in an education and training context, an individual's prior learning.

There are ways that these skills, credentials and experience could be verified for future career and employment or education admission purposes, however, for this stage in the initiative SEEK has chosen to focus on post-secondary and work-related credentials.

Features that make credentials useful in the labour market

The following section outlines the features that credentials should have to underpin a high-functioning credential passport system, and therefore these are the elements governments should ensure all credentials have.

To be genuinely useful in the education and training sector and the labour market, credentials need to be:

- **Understandable** – employers can efficiently recognise, interpret and compare credentials without needing to deeply interrogate the specific details because key elements are standardised and fit within an overall framework. This is vital when screening large numbers of jobseekers and improves candidate-specific assessment in later stages of the hiring process.
- **Digitised** – comprehensive sources of truth exist for all credentials with full details digitised in near real-time ways into secure systems and are organised with structured and normalised metadata to unlock many use cases. Key challenges to solve include digitising the back catalogue of previously issued credentials, and eliminating reporting delays across many decentralised issuers.

- **Shareable** – credentials are readily accessible, in convenient and low friction processes, to any relying party or use case for which the individual gives consent. For maximum labour market value, access should be available to any relying party – that is, any entity with a stake in the process – with appropriate consent from the user (the individuals whose data / information it is) and with support for multiple, flexible access methods including application programming interfaces (APIs), web portals, and shareable artefacts (e.g. PDFs).
- **Verifiable** – relying parties can easily and efficiently confirm that credential details or related claims are valid, accurate, complete and have not been tampered. Verification methods should support all forms by which credentials may be shared – e.g. cryptographically signing PDFs, offering verifiable links and QR codes, and ensuring web portals and APIs are available to check details at source.
- **Low or no cost** – cost is removed as a barrier to ensure that trusted and verified information on skills and credentials are readily used and expected across the labour market wherever it helps, for as many people as possible. When issuers of credentials see data access or verification as a cost recovery or revenue generation opportunity, it harms the overall labour market by slowing labour movements and adding friction. It also means the individual fails to fully unlock the power of the credential for their employment journey, even though they, their employer or the government have already paid for that credential.

Next steps

SEEK welcomes the opportunity to make this submission. We look forward to the opportunity to share the ideas and thinking presented in our submission through ongoing consultation with government.

Attachments

Attachment A – Examples of other specialist credential passports

Attachment B – Examples of where government can improve the utility of existing credentials

Submitted on behalf of SEEK Limited by:

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Head of Government Relations and Economics

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In addition to SEEK's credential passport Certsy (<https://certsy.com>), there are various other passports active in Australia and globally. An illustrative but incomplete list from public sources is below:

- LinkedIn Profiles (with verification by Persona)
- buildpass.com.au
- dock.io
- meeco.me
- mypassglobal.com
- cited.com.au/oncite-app
- swagapp.com
- velocitycareerlabs.com
- veremark.com
- yoti.com

Attachment B – Where government can improve the utility of existing credentials



Below are examples of how Federal and State and Territory governments could support labour market efficiency with improved systems, interface access, and structures for various credentials. This is not a comprehensive list but is based on our direct experience of challenges found in verifying credentials.

| National | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| Credential or Document | Digitizing credentials into central systems of record (ideally singular / national) | Providing better access to an existing system (both technical & policy related) | Establishing frameworks and standards to make usage and verification more understandable, tractable & consistent |
| Higher Education | See sections above | | |
| VET Qualifications | See sections above | | |
| Micro Credentials | See sections above | | |
| Working Rights (VEVO) | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a finite, accurate and up to date list of visa conditions to enable more automated and precise mapping of visas to suitable jobs and situations Clarify data retention & deletion obligations for organisations when verifying credentials for onboarding |
| Police Check / Nationally Coordinated Criminal History Check (NCCHC) | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require state police agencies to align to the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (ACIC) and National Police Checking Service (NPCS) standards (e.g. higher identity proofing, one consistent certificate format, etc) |
| NDIS | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Broaden rules to allow non-NDIS-provider access to the NDIA Worker Screening Database, via an API. | |
| State and Territory | | | |
| Credential or Document | Digitizing credentials into central systems of record (ideally singular / national) | Providing better access to an existing system (both technical & policy related) | Establishing frameworks and standards to make usage and verification more understandable, tractable & consistent |

State and Territory

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Construction Induction Cards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digitise all State Construction Induction Cards (currently only NSW and Vic) In all states and territories, these are currently all physical cards with no expiry dates, inconsistent or even handwritten formats, often worn/damaged, and prone to fraud as only verifiable by visually sighting Once the cards are digitised the issuing state should also set up an API to enable at-source verification | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set framework / standards across all states & territories for more consistent use of terms, codes, licence names Improve interoperability and consistency in credential life cycle – i.e. how a credential gets issued, is maintained, is renewed, when it's suspended and / or expires – across states and territories. |
| Drivers Licence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include drivers licences from 'Other Territories' (e.g. Christmas Island, Norfolk Island, Cocos & Keeling Islands) in the Document Verified System (DVS) Enable approved private sector use of the new National Driver Licence Facial Recognition Solution (NDLFRS) to allow for more efficient and accurate biometric matching of self-portrait images against the database. | <p>Credential protection: Resolve the non-standard response across state/territory issuing authorities to protect users after high profile data breaches. Invest in simpler and clearer ways to communicate to users how these mechanism work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's a nuanced and confusing concept for users that their driver's licence is valid but is not a verifiable identity document DVS Credential Protection Register (CPR) - users often don't know about the CPR and the fact they've been put on it, so are confused when licence doesn't verify online with DVS. WA Drivers Licence holders can self-manage 'blocking' their Drivers Licence, but still get confused when it doesn't verify. <p>Single names</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently a very fractured approach to the way 'single names' are recorded on identity documents, and therefore downstream impact to verifying these documents successfully. 'Single names' are common in people from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The misalignment on how to handle 'single names' nationally impacts on service providers ability to provide an inclusive identity solution to all. We recommend standardising how single names are recorded and handled across all credentials in all states and territories |

State and Territory

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| High Risk Work Licences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digitise all High Risk Work Licence cards (currently only NSW and Vic have digital options). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to online portals, provide access to an API for more robust verification (e.g. WA, SA, VIC). For NSW, provide API or app-sharing features so no need to visually sight document or screenshot of app. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve interoperability and consistency in credential life cycle – i.e. how a credential gets issued, is maintained, is renewed, when it's suspended and / or expires – across states and territories. |
| Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above for educational quals, move to near real-time reporting of VET qualifications for RSA for all providers (i.e. eliminate need to visually sight statements of attainment). RSA has highly decentralized issuance from many training providers, and there can be long lags in reporting new RSA credential to the central USI repository. So a newly qualified person may not be able to verify at the point in time they most want to demonstrate their qual to the labour market. But it will flow through eventually (maybe 3-6 months later). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a single API per state for verification of currently active RSA qualifications (ideally with notification if status changes). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve interoperability and consistency in credential life cycle – i.e. how a credential gets issued, is maintained, is renewed, when it's suspended and / or expires – across states and territories. |
| Working with Vulnerable People | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digitise ACT working with vulnerable people credential, currently physical cards verifiable only by visual sighting so vulnerable to fraud | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change NSW access rules so approved intermediaries – beyond those organisations that employ people directly who need this credential – can access the system with a suitable API. It is currently limited to direct employers, which impedes a convenient national verify solution and the ability for people to highlight this credential to employer via a direct application to a job ad or to have it visible to employers searching candidates database. Provide API for NT and TAS (today requires manual verification via a portal with captcha protection). Provide API for QLD, VIC, SA (today can be automated via portal, but would be more robust to have proper API) Provide API for ACT (no digital system) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve interoperability and consistency in credential life cycle – i.e. how a credential gets issued, is maintained, is renewed, when it's suspended and / or expires – across states and territories. Clarify data retention and deletion obligations for organisations (employers) when verifying a Working with Vulnerable People check for onboarding |

State and Territory

Professional
/ Trade
Licences

- Improve interoperability and consistency in credential life cycle – i.e. how a credential gets issued, is maintained, is renewed, when it's suspended and / or expires – across states and territories.