



# Appendix F – Annual Report of the Student Identifiers Registrar

## About the Unique Student Identifier

Since 2015, all students in the vocational education and training (VET) sector must have a Unique Student Identifier (USI), a randomly generated alpha-numerical 10-digit identifier. The requirement for a USI was extended to higher education students seeking Commonwealth financial assistance on 1 January 2021.

Over 14 million USIs have been assigned and during 2022–23 more than 3,600 education or training providers and VET or higher education related entities were using our system.

Students need a USI if they are studying nationally recognised VET; if they are in higher education and needing a Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) loan or enrolling in a Commonwealth supported place (CSP); or if they are a higher education student graduating in 2023 or beyond.

Students undertaking a nationally recognised VET course or completing an apprenticeship require a USI to receive their qualification. Registered training organisations attach USIs to training records sent to the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research, where they are stored. This enables the creation of a secure online record of the student's training, and the production of an authenticated USI VET transcript. Students can use their VET transcript when applying for a job, seeking a credit transfer, or demonstrating training prerequisites.

The USI is a linkage key, creating more accurate data on vocational education enrolments, training completion and pathways. In this way it can support targeted policymaking and resource allocation by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

## Authorising legislation

The *Student Identifiers Act 2014* provides for a Commonwealth statutory office holder, the Student Identifiers Registrar, to oversee the implementation and management of the USI nationally.

The Registrar's functions include:

- assigning and verifying student identifiers
- preparing a student's authenticated transcript
- enabling students to give third parties access to their transcript
- protecting students' personal information from unauthorised access or misuse.

The Registrar is appointed on a full-time basis for up to 5 years by the Commonwealth Minister administering the *Student Identifiers Act 2014* after consulting state and territory ministers. Ms Janette Dines was the Student Identifiers Registrar from 15 April 2019 to 13 January 2023. Mr Glen Watson is acting Student Identifiers Registrar until confirmation of the appointment of a new Registrar.

The Registrar is assisted by APS employees from the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), and by contractors. On 30 June 2023 there were a total of 66 staff supporting the Registrar.

The Registrar manages the Student Identifiers Special Account. The account is a special account for the purposes of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. The appropriation for the 2022–23 financial year was \$10.326 million and the total spend was \$9.882 million.

This report is prepared in compliance with section 51 of the *Student Identifiers Act 2014*.

### **Registrar overview**

In 2022–23 our focus was to ensure our services were accessible, available, and seamless to our continuously expanding customer base.

We now have over 14.4 million customers, more than 1.3 million new customers compared to the previous year. The increase in activity across government at all levels and within the education and training sectors, in both tertiary and vocational education, has seen demand for our service grow significantly across all channels.

### **Self-service is simple, secure and improving**

Our aim is that at least 90% of our customers choose to self-serve and can do so simply and easily; over 97% did so. On average over 8,000 students and 761 providers access our system daily. During the year we improved the overall functionality of the USI Registry System through an unprecedented number of system releases, improving our customers' experience and reducing the need to seek assistance. To further improve the experience for customers who require support, we streamlined our help request process.

We handled 20% more calls than the previous year and continued to answer callers well within our target of 2 minutes and 30 seconds. Importantly, we remained vigilant in executing our mission and successfully maintained very high levels of security and protection of the data we collect and hold.

We understand the importance of privacy and having a safe and secure USI. That is our priority. Pleasingly, the number of students creating their USI using Digital Identity has doubled every year since the option was introduced in June 2020, reaching 45,300 USIs in 2022–23.

### **Maintaining the social licence to operate**

A key benefit of the USI is the availability of an authenticated VET transcript of any nationally recognised training completed since 2015. USI account holders can download their VET transcript and give their permission to share the information with third parties, including employers. Our promotion of the VET transcript service over the last 2 years has resulted in:

- a 60% increase in VET transcripts downloaded by USI account holders
- a doubling of VET transcript views by providers
- a tenfold increase in the number of views by third parties, such as employers and licensing bodies.

### **Sector engagement and visibility**

Through our outreach program we have maintained a strong and visible national presence. Our support and participation in over 22 student career and employment expos and industry events ensured exposure to 159,000 students across high school, higher education and the VET sector. We raised brand awareness and promoted our service, resulting in 10,000 leads and a larger social media footprint, gaining 2,600 new Instagram followers and reaching 46,000 accounts.



## Satisfying our customers

We strive for a great customer experience in every channel and have expanded our customer survey to our website and the student portal. While we are pleased with the results, we still have some work to do to achieve our goals in all 3 service channels:

- 89% of callers surveyed post-call rated us 5 out of 5 stars
- 83% of customers using our website said they were satisfied with the service, and provided us with some very useful feedback
- 84% of the customers who accessed our services via the student portal rated their experience 4 out of 5 stars.

Feedback we received included:

- Hey, I had help from an agent, I would just like to say she was so helpful, she was very kind and assisted me with everything and was super professional about her role!!
- Your agent was very helpful [and] got my problem solved within minutes.
- Called this morning 28/10 from Perth with sign in challenges and received outstanding assistance. Really appreciated your friendly attitude and solved my problem in a matter of minutes. Great work.
- Great job guys – hadn't used my USI in a few years, but the mobile phone and birthdate lookup had the text sent to me with the USI in no time.
- I needed my USI, I followed the instructions on the website, I got my USI. Perfect.

## The team were enabled and inspired

Throughout 2022–23, the USI team rose as one to each new challenge with energy, enthusiasm, and a commitment to take ownership and do their best work. Members of the USI team say this is a good place to work, they are clear on their role, and they are supported to do their best job with a clear line of sight to our customers. In both our own locally developed staff survey and the APS agency survey, staff participation has been high and the staff satisfaction results are well above par on every measure.

## Exciting future ahead

We are well placed to take on the additional challenges that lie ahead for us in 2023–24 and are excited to soon be expanding the options for our customers to connect with us through myGov. Customers will be able to link their USI and myGov accounts and access their USI with other government services in one place. We are also working with the Department of Education to expand the USI to the school sector. The aim is to provide all school students with a USI and create an individual education number for life.

I have appreciated the opportunity to promote the government's priorities and lead the USI team in providing students and providers of education and training services with a high level of support and an unwavering commitment to protecting their privacy and security.

### Glen Watson

Student Identifiers Registrar

## 2022–23 at a glance



**1.3** million new USIs



**14.4** million total USIs as at 30 June 2023



**1.5** million transcript views/downloads  
(43% increase\*)



**45,300** USIs created using Digital Identity bringing the total to **75,000**



**6,338** USI accounts accessed using Digital Identity



**9.2** million self-service transactions



**179,000** calls handled (30,050 more calls\*)



**81,000** online help requests actioned



**1 minute 23 seconds** Call average speed of answer (14 seconds longer\*\*)



**1** notifiable data breach reported to Office of the Australian Information Commissioner

\* Compared to 2021–22 data

^ Based on daily averages



# USI mission statement



## Performance information

### GOAL 1: KNOW OUR MARKET

#### KPI: WE KNOW WHO OUR CUSTOMERS ARE AND WHAT THEY NEED FROM US


##### What we did

##### Directly engaged with our target audience:

- by surveying 112,097 customers to rate their service
- through attendance at 15 student career expos and 7 industry forums:
  - › promoted the USI via exposure to over 159,000 students across high school, higher education and VET sectors
  - › gained 10,000 direct leads which allowed for follow-up communications
  - › gained 2,600 new social media followers, reached 46,000 accounts and achieved 684 engagements with 124 customers contacting us with questions
- by sending 19 eNews and electronic direct mail items to 47,994 recipients, with a total click-through of 3,827.

##### Collaborated with key stakeholders:

- We chaired the USI Advisory Group and USI External Reference Group meetings, attended by 23 stakeholders.
- We participated in a Heads of Student Administration webinar attended by 109 representatives from the tertiary education sector to discuss the Student Identifiers (Higher Education Exemptions) Instrument for international students.
- We met with stakeholders in South Australia, Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory to maintain positive relationships to support working together more effectively and inform decision-making.
- We met with 6 higher education providers to check readiness for the 2023 requirement that students must have a USI to graduate.
- Feature articles on the USI initiative, VET transcripts and student permissions in the May and November editions of the Velg Training *Staying Connected in VET* magazine were distributed to a combined total of approximately 170,000 recipients working in the VET sector.
- The USI initiative was featured in:
  - › the South Australian Tertiary Admissions Centre (SATAC) Guide 2023, distributed to 23,000 schools across South Australia and the Northern Territory
  - › the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) year 10 and year 12 guides, reaching 70,000 students
  - › *Where to Next?* magazine, reaching 17,500 students in Brisbane, Townsville, Mackay and Darwin.

- 
- We targeted international students with communications on how and when to get a USI, through Austrade communication channels.
  - Over 800 members of the Career Advisers Association (CAA) received email communications about the USI initiative.

**Changed our processes:**

- We onboarded correctional facilities as VET admission bodies, enabling them to create USIs for students.
- We expanded our data capture to include the reasons why education and training providers are using the Document Verification Service (DVS) override function, to better understand the volume of students who do not have access to a verifiable form of identity.

**Engaged through social media:**

- We conducted an SMS campaign in partnership with the Universities Admissions Centre, reaching 39,758 year 12 students entering higher education in 2023, with a click-through rate of 11.5%.
- We promoted the USI to 2,700 customers through the CAA Facebook profile.

**GOAL 2: DELIVER A SIMPLE AND SECURE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

**What we did**

**Through the USI Registry System, we:**

- created a new Provider Profile tile allowing education and training providers to view their organisation details and system expiry dates
- removed third-party authority access to 122 incarcerated students' USI accounts through a review of access requirements.

**To reduce customer effort, we changed our processes and:**

- streamlined the evidence of identity process for 19 registered training organisations delivering training to incarcerated students
- introduced 2 new DVS document types to assist students with creating or updating their USI details
- confirmed that 274 international onshore students were eligible to create a USI using the new Visa Entitlement Verification Online system
- reviewed the personal information we collect from our customers to protect against potential cybersecurity breach
- increased security when releasing compliance information by applying an independent verification process
- enhanced our online feedback and complaints forms to include an optional 'proof of identity' section – resulting in 72 customers being served immediately online (compared to nil prior to this enhancement).

**Strengthened self-service ability through the USI website by:**

- updating our privacy notice telling customers how their information is collected and used
- redeveloping the USI exemption web form with defined higher education and international student options, providing a more user-friendly experience and clearer guidance on eligibility for an exemption.

**Improved staff capability:**

- to support any customers experiencing family and domestic violence
- by facilitating an all-staff Privacy Awareness Week meeting to raise awareness of privacy issues and the importance of protecting personal information.

**KPI: SPEED OF SERVICE**

🕒 **TARGET:** Average speed to answer does not exceed **2 minutes and 30 seconds**

✅ **ACHIEVEMENT:** Average call wait time of **1 minute and 23 seconds**

**KPI: CUSTOMER SATISFACTION**

🕒 **TARGET:** 85% of callers surveyed are satisfied with our service\*

✅ **ACHIEVEMENT:** 89% of respondents gave us 5 out of 5 stars

\* 71,494 customers took our post-call survey

🕒 **TARGET:** 85% of customers using the **USI Portal** are satisfied (based on 4 and 5 star rating)\*

❌ **ACHIEVEMENT:** 84.0% of users are satisfied with their USI Portal experience

\* 2,599 customers responded to the portal survey upon successful creation or location of their USI

🕒 **TARGET:** 90% of users are satisfied with their **USI website** experience (yes/no rating)\*

❌ **ACHIEVEMENT:** 83% of users are satisfied with their USI website experience

\* 38,004 customers provided a response to the website feedback question

**KPI: THE USI REGISTRY SYSTEM SUPPORTS SELF-SERVICE**

🕒 **TARGET:** 90% of transactions are self-service

✅ **ACHIEVEMENT:** 97.24%





---

## KPI: THE USI REGISTRY SYSTEM IS HIGHLY AVAILABLE

- **TARGET:** 99% of the time the Student Portal is available and operational
- ✓ **ACHIEVEMENT:** 99.72%

---

## KPI: NUMBER OF DATA BREACHES

- **TARGET:** 0 reportable data breaches and no more than 8 non-reportable data breaches\*
- ✗ **ACHIEVEMENT:** 1 reportable breach and 9 non-reportable breaches

\* Reportable data breaches are those that may cause serious harm to an individual and therefore must be reported to the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC)

---

## KPI: STAFF PROTECT STUDENTS' PERSONAL INFORMATION

- **TARGET:** 100% of staff are trained in, and aware of, their privacy obligations

### ACHIEVEMENT:

- ✗ 99.25% of staff completed mandatory privacy, security, and fraud awareness training
- ✓ 100% of staff completed data breach training in accordance with OAIC requirements

## GOAL 3: SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT AND THROUGH IT THE NATION

## KPI: WE SUPPORT AND ENABLE GOVERNMENT POLICY

### What we did

#### Collaborated

- Partnered with DEWR, Services Australia and the Australian Taxation Office to develop a short video to help students navigate their next steps after school.
- Educated the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency on their authority to collect, use and disclose USIs under the *Student Identifiers Act 2014* in support of their training verification project.
- Collaborated with the Department of Education to amend the Student Identifiers (Higher Education Exemptions) Instrument, addressing an international student cohort not initially anticipated.
- Contributed to service improvements as a member of DEWR's VET Data Streamlining Board .
- As a member of the Digital Identity and myGov portfolio board and steering committee, worked to connect the USI initiative through those platforms.
- Assisted the Department of Education to develop policy on exemptions for higher education students.
- Cooperated on the expansion of the USI initiative to the school sector through service design workshops with the Department of Education and DEWR.
- Processed 18 compliance requests for information from law enforcement or regulatory agencies.
- Processed 3 requests for information from law enforcement or regulatory agencies.

- Collaborated with the National Centre for Vocational Education Research to provide data for the National Student Outcomes Survey.
- Collaborated with the New South Wales Department of Education to provide data for the Student Pathways Program.

#### **Amended internal policies and procedures and facilitated training to staff**

- Managed a significant increase in requests from international students who require a USI exemption to support receiving their higher education award.
- Simplified the process for customers following introduction of the **Student Identifiers (Higher Education Exemptions) Amendment (Education Minister Exemptions) Instrument 2023** (effective 22 May 2023), resulting in fewer students needing to complete applications.
- Provided 1,451 international students with letters of confirmation that they are automatically exempt from needing a USI under the Student Identifiers (Higher Education Exemptions) Instrument.

#### **Informed**

- Sent over 16,000 emails to support education and training providers' move to USI Registry System Web Service Version 5.
- Released data to support research to:
  - › the Australian Bureau of Statistics for the Multi-Agency Data Integration Project
  - › the New South Wales Government for the Future Pathways projects.

#### **Responded**

- Analysed over 2,500 evidence of identity forms, enabling students who did not have identity documents to create a USI.
- Granted USI exemptions to:
  - › 30 onshore VET students
  - › 21 onshore higher education students
  - › 4 offshore VET students
  - › 895 offshore higher education students.
- Provided 1,451 international students with confirmation of automatic exemption from needing a USI under the Student Identifiers (Higher Education Exemptions) Instrument.
- Processed 42 compliance requests for information about 1,651 individuals for 17 law enforcement or regulatory agencies.



## GOAL 4: INNOVATE TO IMPROVE OUR USI CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND DO OUR WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY

### KPI: WE ARE OPEN TO NEW WAYS OF DOING THINGS

---

#### What we did

- Improved the overall functionality of the USI Registry System with a total of 14 system releases.
- Updated our telephony system to improve customer services by providing callers with estimated call wait times and the ability to request a call back.
- Enhanced our use of the DVS by:
  - › giving staff real-time visibility of identification database outages
  - › integrating functionality to provide students with a clear DVS error message to assist in fixing matching issues
  - › adding aviation and maritime security identification cards as acceptable forms of identification
  - › adding driver licence card number as a mandatory verification field to improve security.
- Introduced the Visa Entitlement Verification Online system available through the Department of Home Affairs to verify that international students are eligible for a USI.
- Released enhanced functionality allowing education and training providers to bulk verify USIs in the Organisation Portal and expanded this functionality to VET admission bodies and tertiary admissions centres.
- Enhanced the help request process to remove double handling by integrating the USI Registry System with Genesys and allowed students to:
  - › upload documents securely
  - › create a help request when the identification verification system is not available
  - › submit file sizes up to 5 MB per attachment
  - › create a help request when updating personal details.

## GOAL 5: ENABLE AND INSPIRE TEAM USI TO TAKE OWNERSHIP AND DO ITS BEST WORK

### KPI: OUR CULTURE SUPPORTS STAFF

#### What we did

##### Staff development

- We invested in 'Radical Candor' training to encourage constructive feedback across Team USI.
- Our leadership team participated in the Dare to Lead workshop, which promotes brave leadership and honest conversations towards building a courageous culture.
- We piloted a new business assurance framework for evaluating services and decisions, identifying 29 business improvement recommendations.
- We piloted a new 12-week development program to build APS 4 staff capability and knowledge across teams.
- We introduced a Learning and Development Framework to promote and instil a culture of continuous learning and development to improve staff capabilities and grow towards better performance.

##### Activities and initiatives

- Celebrated NAIDOC week and promoted R U OK? Day.
- Participated in a DEWR panel discussion on how Team USI improved its APS census results.
- Celebrated and acknowledged Neurodiversity Celebration Week and Harmony Week in all-staff activities.

## Culture Statement



### Trust

We have a firm belief in one another to be reliable, truthful and capable.



### Learning

We learn from the past to prepare for our future.



### Working together

Even when working alone we are working together to support our mission statement.



### Transparent communication

We have a firm belief in one another to be reliable, truthful and capable.



**KPI: WE ARE A GOOD PLACE TO WORK**

**TARGET:** 100% of staff report role clarity, support, and a line of sight to our customers

**Table F.1: Goal 5 performance measures, 2022–23**

Achievement	Annual average strongly/agreed*
I understand what is expected of me and my current role	100%
I understand how my job contributes to the customer experience	100%
I believe the USI team has a strong privacy culture	99%
I know who to ask if I need help with any aspects of my current role	100%
I have the necessary resources I need to perform my duties	97%
I feel that my manager sees my wellbeing as a priority	95%
I feel that my ideas are welcome	96%
I understand the link between my job and the USI mission statement	100%
I have discussed my learning and development needs with my manager	95%

\* Staff were surveyed quarterly until March 2023. Thereafter the survey will be taken biannually in March and September. These percentages are an average of all 3 quarters where staff provided a response of either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed'.