



CIVIL CONTRACTORS FEDERATION
Constructing Australia's Infrastructure™

ABN 41 639 349 350

The Chairperson
Standing Reference Committee on
Education, Employment and Workplace
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5 August 2010

Re: Inquiry by the Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee into Industry Skills Councils

Dear Senator Cash

The Civil Contractors Federation welcomes the Inquiry by the Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee into Industry Skills Councils.

We have provided some initial comments and given that the Committee reference is occurring during the Election campaign we also reserve the right to make further submissions should that become necessary.

The Civil Contractors Federation

The Civil Contractors Federation (CCF) is the member based representative body of civil engineering contractors in Australia providing assistance and expertise in contractor development and industry issues.

Through our Federation we represent 2000 small, medium and large sized contractors who in turn employ many thousands of Australians in an industry of some 350,000 people.

Our members are involved in a variety of projects and activities including the development and maintenance of civil infrastructure such as roads, bridges, dams, wharves, commercial and housing land development.

Infrastructure development plays a vital role in our national prosperity.

The CCF has a live and real interest in skills and skills training – both from broad policy objectives and as an active participant in the training market.

CCF currently operates 5 state based Registered Training Organisations under the trading name Civil Train. The establishment of Civil Train in the early 2000's coincided with commencement of uptake of the civil construction training packages. CCF has had a long involvement in providing industry advice on the original development and subsequent updating of the civil industry training packages.

A key driver for CCF's participation has been the strong desire within the industry for nationally recognised qualifications to support enterprise specific training. Training provision in the civil construction industry covers full qualifications under the AQTF and has been supported by User Choice funding in some states. However, both the access to and the quantum of funding through User Choice varies considerably from state to state.

Given our interest in training and the development of industry training packages we work very closely with our Skills Council SkillsDMC and are very supportive of its work and activities.

We enjoy a close and very productive relationship both at a National level with the SkillsDMC Executive (Mr Des Caulfield and Ms Dorothy Rao) and also a State level with the SkillsDMC advisers who work closely with our State organisations.

Our Skills Council SkillsDMC

The Civil Contractors Federation is a key participant in a number of activities of our Skills Council.

The civil construction sector itself is represented on the Board of SkillsDMC and CCF as an industry association participates in the civil sector standing committee and working parties.

We are supportive of the current governance arrangements in so far as they ensure representation of the key issues for our sector.

General comments

We work with SkillsDMC on a number of issues from the training package endorsement process through to SkillsDMC working directly with CCF members through Government programs such as the Enterprise Based Productivity Place Program.

SkillsDMC brought together the five sectors it represents in a very effective way to achieve the goal of rationalising the training packages whilst ensuring that each sector was satisfied with the outcomes. In addition, SkillsDMC has implemented a process to ensure that training package issues including continuous improvement to accommodate emerging needs are addressed in a timely way.

We have found the Industry Council very receptive to working with us on skills issues and highly responsive. They have been practical and targeted in their dealings with us working hard for the benefit of the industry overall.

We are also impressed with the way SkillsDMC works to provide support to all its stakeholders given the limited resources available to them and what from their perspective would be competing demands for limited resources.

Civil Construction is in many ways disadvantaged in the current training system. A number of our occupations do not receive the same recognition as other like trades and we have found SkillsDMC to be just as concerned as we are to ensure parity and appropriate support for our occupations.

In particular, SkillsDMC worked very closely with us on a recent major report into skills needs in civil construction under the auspices of a reference by the then Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard MP to Skills Australia. This is covered in the submission of SkillsDMC to this Inquiry.

The project involved a very close collaboration between CCF and SkillsDMC and included a detailed survey of our members. SkillsDMC advisers worked very closely with members assisting them in completing the survey and then worked with us in analysing the outcome. We would like to particularly acknowledge to the Committee the outstanding contribution by Ms Dorothy Rao and Ms Jodie Badcock in that process.

The Report is a very important contribution to filling the data gap that currently exists in understanding the skills shortages and gaps in the industry. The very good response to the survey would not have been possible without the close working relationships between the SkillsDMC advisers and our State Chief Executive Officers and members.

Most importantly as an outcome of the project we are working closely with the Skills Council to undertake activities which will assist us in meeting the skills shortages of our members.

Conclusion

As noted we are very supportive of the work of SkillsDMC and believe that they will continue to be an integral part in the industry responding to future skills shortages.

We would be happy to provide any further information or detail as required.

Yours sincerely

Mr Chris White
National Chief Executive Officer