

23 July 2010

Committee Secretary  
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Inquiry into Industry Skills Councils

The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) performs the role of the Construction Industry Skills Board in South Australia, by arrangement with the State Government. One of its directed tasks is liaison with the National ISCs, namely the Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council (CPSISC) in so far as general construction is concerned and with SkillsDMC in so far as civil construction is concerned.

Our relationship with the CPSISC has previously been especially strained during the development of the CPC08 construction training package. We expressed a number of concerns about the lack of rigour in the consultation that was undertaken.

I am pleased to say, however, that there has been a significant effort to improve relationships with construction stakeholders. The Board now includes representatives of the Housing Industry Association and the Master Builders Association and the Chair of the Board is well versed in construction matters being Lindsay Fraser, the Assistant Secretary of the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union.

There remain issues of concern which we consider problematic. Primarily this concerns the lack of appropriate structures for participation of the State and Territory Industry Advisory Bodies in the key decision making structures of the CPSISC, namely, the Board of the CPSISC and also the Construction Industry Advisory Committee.

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The construction State and Territory IABs have formed a Network which is well placed to provide industry input to the Board of the CPSISC. Despite numerous requests to be included on the Board, the CPSISC has refused and in recent times cancelled Network representation on the Construction Industry Advisory Committee which advised the Board. The alternative provided to the Network which involved a joint committee with the property IABs, is not acceptable.

There are several reasons why the Network considers that a representative would be useful to the Board of the CPSISC:

1. Each IAB has well established Board structures and methods for consultation and intelligence gathering which cannot be replicated in such detail and balance by a National ISC. In most instances, the IABs are able to provide input which constitutes a position that has been negotiated and agreed by different stakeholders based on the trust and familiarity built through regular contact.
2. There are many instances where the input that could be provided would discern between States and Territories and this is crucial as there are unique factors pertaining to different States and Territories. For example, different skills required for different construction methods in common use in the location based on the availability of materials and/or climatic conditions; factors relating to business practices and economic conditions (e.g., preponderance of small self employed subcontractors in smaller States and Territories, existence of mining companies and the impact on the construction workforce); the variation in training/VET sector and the impact on skills development in States and Territories where there is a Training Fund, etc.
3. The Network representative on the Board would be required to consult with IAB representatives in preparation for CPSISC Board meetings. The Network meets several times per year to discuss matters of common interest and consults regularly by phone and email. This level of coordination being provided to the Board of the CPSISC would build on the commitment of the ISC to consult broadly.
4. The Network representative would be able to provide input about the consultation that was occurring with State Training Authorities in their respective States and Territories thereby providing intelligence to the Board that would be invaluable in matters pertaining to training packages and VET regulation.

Formalising a role for a Network representative would have allayed many of the concerns that the construction industry had about the development of the ceiling insulation training materials and which they currently have about the development of qualifications in building design and sustainability assessment.

While these formal structures do not exist with SkillsDMC we have found the staff inclusive and consultative.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Marsland  
Presiding Member