

The Food, Tourism and Hospitality Industry Skills Advisory Council SA Inc. trading as the FTH Skills Council (FTH) and the Service Skills Industry Alliance SA Inc. trading as Service Skills South Australia (SSSA) are two of the nine Industry Skills Boards in South Australia who have been operating for over five years with base funding from the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST) in South Australia.

FTH and SSSA have coverage over industry sectors in South Australia (as strategic facilitators between industry and government on vocational training and workforce development) that spans across parts of three National Industry Skills Councils. These are Service Skills Australia, Innovation and Business Skills Australia and AgriFood Skills Australia.

FTH and SSSA have good working relationships with all three National Industry Skills Councils (ISC's) and have been involved in a range of activities with the ISC's including training package development, representation on national committees, networking, environmental scans, workforce development projects and the provision of consultants for national projects.

FTH and SSSA are very aware of the major productivity, participation and demographic challenges facing Australia and the need for coordinated and collaborative effort by both industry and governments on these issues through the skills agenda.

Both councils have a very strong belief that the level of funding and resources being made available by state and federal governments for vocational skills and related workforce development is adequate, but there are significant opportunities to improve the effectiveness of this resourcing.

This can be achieved by utilising more structured and collaborative industry and government networks driven by clear and explicit national guidance through a range of channels. Effective skills and workforce development eco-systems operate at a range of levels including national, state, regional, local, on an enterprise basis and through industry, industry sector and sub sector, RTO, school, all levels of government and community based networks and associations.

With this direction in mind we make the following recommendations to the Senate Enquiry into Industry Skills Councils: -

Recommendations to the Senate Inquiry into Industry Skills Councils

- § It is critically important to align the roles of national and state/territory Industry Skills Councils to achieve a more collaborative, efficient and consistent means of meeting the national policy and reform directions established under the COAG *National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development*
- § The formation of a cohesive national and state/territory network of skills councils driven by the COAG agenda would be particularly effective in:
 - Identifying barriers and implementing changes needed in the structure and operation of the training system both nationally and locally
 - Ensuring that skills are fully utilised and wastage of human capital is minimised by exposing, promoting and implementing best practice in skills and workforce development
 - Strengthening the capacity of training providers and business to build the foundation for the skills required for the future
 - Reforming training products, services, information systems and regulation to meet a more client driven system
 - Provide a mechanism to allow opportunities for national employers to access the same support and funding in each state and territory
- § The alignment would establish a framework around which collaborative and complementary State and Commonwealth funding agreements could be developed creating the opportunity to introduce an integrated and holistic approach to the application of public resources to major skills and workforce initiatives

- § To underpin the collaborative arrangement it would be necessary for state and commonwealth government agencies to fund national and at least part fund state/territory Skills Councils and joint initiatives that the Commonwealth might consider vitally important to industry and the country. These arrangement would not prevent either state or national skills councils undertaking specific workforce or skill development initiatives relating to local or national issues
- § The establishment of a national and state network of industry skills councils would underpin a far more comprehensive and relevant collection of industry/workforce intelligence that would better inform Commonwealth policy and the application of program funding
- § A formal national and state/territory skills council network underpinned by a commonwealth/state agreement would provide government with significantly better advice and direction in relation to:
 - Quality assurance and regulation
 - VET in schools
 - Industry engagement at many levels
 - Opportunities to link to intersecting state departments such as education etc.
 - Proprieties for strategic industry development
 - The improved integration and delivery of Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations programs and funding in states and territories.

FTH and SSSA are aware that the implementation of these recommendations would involve the consideration of a wide range of issues on a national and state basis, but believe that the benefits would be significant. FTH and SSSA are available to provide more detailed commentary on these recommendations if required.