

Inquiry into Industry Skills Councils

The Victorian Food Industry Training Board would like to make a submission to this enquiry. This Board has coverage of food processing including:

Baking	Beverage	Confectionery	Dairy	Edible Oils and Fats
Fruit & Vegetables		General Foods	Meat	Milling
Pharmaceutical	Poultry	Seafood	Wine	

Our work includes promoting the formal training system, working with industry to collect information on training needs and developments, improving liaison with the training providers and developing and reviewing training package material. We contribute to a broad range of information provision roles and reinforce developments in the VET sector, and so require a robust partnership with the national Industry Skills Council, AgriFood Skills Australia.

In general we support the work of the ISC with provision of industry reports, support for publicising events and networking and linking in to industry contacts in Victoria, to promote and strengthen the VET training system and the training packages in particular.

(a) the role and effectiveness of Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) in the operation of the national training system particularly as it relates to states and territories and rural and regional Australia;

Training System Operation

The AgriFood Skills Australia annual report entitled the “Environmental Scan” raises systemic issues of relevance to the sector. It highlights issues such as the collection of training enrolment data being only partial, reflecting only government funded enrolments, and thus omitting major training investment by privately/company funded training using the Training Packages. Their 2010 report also highlighted the difficulty in finding industry experienced and industry ready trainers to deliver training. These are both important factors in understanding and devising policy for a national training system.

This Industry Training Board has coverage over food processing, pharmaceutical, seafood processing and meat processing training packages. Extensive work has been conducted in the last two years on food processing package, via the AgriFood consultants. We have been happy with the opportunities to meet with the curriculum writers/consultants, and the efforts they have made to seek industry input to the unit of competency drafting and validation processes. Unfortunately prior to that there were significant delays in reviews of the FDF03 package. We welcome an increased focus on the **food processing** industries, as compared to the agriculture, horticulture and racing industries also covered by the ISC.

Some positive food processing training package developments have included the creation of new higher qualifications in Food Science and Technology, using the existing Victorian state accredited qualifications as a starting point. The new Certificate IV, yet to be endorsed, in Advanced Baking, is also a development welcomed by industry.

There is room for more fulsome and extensive communication of key training sector issues, such as the major change to the Packaging Guidelines agreed to by COAG in November. As part of this heightened flow of national training sector information, a more formal national network of the ISC and the state Training Boards would also improve efficiency in this area. Stronger guidance and leadership, in a time of considerable change, is recommended.

Formalising annual information sharing

While we have had informal requests to provide our state based industry research reports to the national AgriFood Skills Australia ISC, to contribute to their annual **Environmental Scan**, a more formal process could be useful, eg. proforma for information gathering, sharing of each state's reports around the country, a forum to meet and present findings, etc. This can also include sharing information on the WELL program, and EBPPP training initiatives in the sector.

(b) accountability mechanisms in relation to Commonwealth funding for the general operation and specific projects and programs of each ISC;

(c) corporate governance arrangements of ISCs;

(d) Commonwealth Government processes to prioritise funding allocations across all ISCs;

(e) ISC network arrangements and co-operative mechanisms implemented between relevant boards;

Working across the whole training system

Use of the training package consultant who also works for another ISC has been beneficial. The training system needs 'system wide' intelligence and experience, to keep it adhering to generic principles.

Following on from the above suggestions re tightening the relationship to cooperate, between state Industry Training Boards and the ISC, could improve efficiency and the flow of information and intelligence around the country.

Formalised Victorian industry representation

Currently one member of the VFITB committee sits on the AgriFood Australia Board of Directors and two VFITB committee members sit on the AgriFood Skills Food Standing Committee. this situation has happened more by default than design. This could become an element in a Memorandum of Understanding, to have such formal representation occurring.

(f) the accrual of accumulated surpluses from public funding over the life of each ISC's operation and its use and purpose;

(g) the effectiveness of each ISC in implementing specific training initiatives, for example the Skills for Sustainability initiative under the National Green Skills Agreement; and

Stronger Formal Links and annual program

While there has been some attempt to focus on sustainability for business operations, there is scope for more concerted activity, information sharing and strengthened communication between the national ISC and the state ITBs.

There is scope to set up an annual series of meetings in each state, or major states, for briefings re key initiatives in training, for our food processing sector, incorporating our national industry-funded meat industry training organisation, MINTRAC, and the ISC and all relevant state training boards. This would improve the opportunities for sharing and implementing effectively, the national agenda.

Currently there are no clear annual fixtures apart from the national conference, which tends to provide big picture economic and workforce topics for presentations, rather than detailed training sector and training package content. There almost needs to be a specific Training Sector suite of forums, annually, to meet this need.

Stronger promotion of apprenticeship and traineeship policies and programs

Other areas where stronger communication and reinforcement of government training policies could assist are in the provision of programs to promote traineeships and apprenticeships.

Ian Nicolson
Executive Officer
On behalf of the VFITB

Linda Baron
Program Manager