

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee Inquiry into Industry Skills Councils

Apologies for submitting after deadline but was not made aware of the inquiry till late.

As a person who has been involved in the seafood industry since 1972 and involved in training, education, workforce development, etc since 1995 I feel that I have significant experience and understanding of the issues to make comment to your inquiry.

My experiences have been entirely with Seafood and the AgriFood Skills area.

Here is my submission:

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**

We are six years into this ISC approach and you would have to say “What has been achieved?” There is a genuine feel around the Standing Committee table that seafood has gone backwards rather than forwards during this time.

There is no Framework to the whole system that enables states/territories/federal government and industry and all the genuine players in the game to have an agreed understanding on issues such as funding, resources, collaborations, research & development. This needs to be a 5 year (or longer) plan where we create the Framework for the Seafood Industry Training Package which will empower everyone within the system.

A list of priorities would be created and as when funding became available it would be agreed that the responsible parties would fund the priorities agreed in the Framework and not do something from ‘left field’ as currently occurs. This enables all parties to have some ownership to the whole issue.

All ISC should benchmark themselves against relevant overseas countries. In the case of seafood that should be with NZ or UK.

I particular raise NZ as an issue. As far as Seafood Skills training/education is concerned we are light years behind NZ in having a system which encourages training and puts the strong emphasis on industry being the driving force. As a result their industry has engaged training, the culture has changed, their training numbers are high compared to ours and they are better skilled in many competencies as a result.

Currently in Australia we have a dog’s breakfast of a system in my opinion. We can continue to throw money at it but my feeling is that it is broken and in need of major repair or complete renewal.

c. **corporate governance arrangements of ISCs**

There is no transparency regarding Company Members. There is nothing to show who the Company Members are, how you apply to become a Company Member, what the roles and responsibilities of Company Members are. The Annual Report for 2008-09 states “Organisations invited to become members would have a ‘fit’ with AgriFood Skills Australia’s management and operational culture (?) and its broader industry role and objectives.”

From: Roy Palmer Email roy.palmer@australianseafood.com.au

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There is no clearly defined person on the Board who has any genuine long term understanding of the seafood industry and its requirements and needs regarding skills training/education and development.

There are no detailed accounts shared with Industry Standing Committees. There is no understanding within the Standing Committees about where funding is being spent and across what sectors.

The Constitution is not made available on the website enabling people to view easily.

It is wrong to have a Board which is supposed to be skills and expertise based which has 3 union people entrenched. This is not a complaint about union people being involved but simply makes a mockery of the 'skills and expertise' situation for industry.

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

You would think that each ISC would do a report on these issues so that there could be a continuous improvement process engaged but I have not seen anything like this.