



NSWALC Submission to the

Senate Inquiry into Industry Skills Councils

Synopsis of documentation



Synopsis

The NSWALC submission to the Senate Inquiry is contained in three volumes:

1. AgriFood Skills Australia: Training Packages and Equity Issues
2. Training Package Technical Issues
3. Briefing document: The Case for an Indigenous Industry Skills Council

and a summary of these reports is provided in this document.

Brief

The NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) examined existing Training Packages for detailed content that was relevant to Indigenous workers and learners. The drive to look at Training Packages came from our long standing frustration in the construction of quality training programs for our Aboriginal Land Council network in NSW and from being unable to source quality units of competency and relevant qualifications to deliver quality outcomes. NSWALC have confirmed the irrelevance of existing qualifications and units of competency relating to Indigenous land use, land maintenance and land management in traditional and modern job roles.

Our concerns are confirmed and supported by the growing body of evidence demonstrating a lack of regard and consultation with industry stakeholders by AgriFood Skills Australia (ASA) in offering sub-standard Training Packages.

Equal access, achieving equal participation and equal outcomes for Indigenous workers and learners has not been planned for and can not be achieved through the rationalised ACH10 Training Package proposed by ASA . The proposed new AHC10 contains no changes from the CLM Training Package built in 2002 and is seen as completely irrelevant to the needs and aspirations of Indigenous people.

NSWALC is looking at a new alignment of the current CLM training package and the viability of a separate Indigenous Land Management Training Package for the national availability and implementation of Indigenous skill sets, qualifications, bilingual delivery systems and RPL processes. We have defined an overarching prerequisite proposal to enable substantial improvement in Indigenous outcomes.

NSWALC have determined that:

- a transformation of the existing arrangements is required for the national Training Package for the Indigenous VET sector
- there is an urgent need for a collaborative agency in shaping an array of workforce skills development, employment outcomes, learning opportunities and skill sets more attuned to Indigenous and local industry occupations and less aligned to mainstream job roles.
- a particular focus is required for both Indigenous job roles and the Indigenous component of mainstream job roles
- the bulk of VET products/training is aligned with jobs and opportunities available elsewhere and not in the places where Indigenous people live,
- Indigenous people innovate their own place based forms of engagement across the customary and modern economies as workers and as learners.

The proposal listens and follows the vision outlined in ***Partners in a Learning Culture, Blueprint for Implementation*** and ***NVEAC's Blueprint for Change*** with the stated aim to embed equity into the DNA of VET.

NSWALC puts forward the following overarching recommendations:

Suspension of the endorsement process for the AHC10 Training Package

- Formal endorsement of the AHC10 Training Package be withheld until the appropriate consultations and development work on the Indigenous units of competency and qualifications have been completed.
- The development of the full range of Indigenous units of competency and a culturally appropriate suite of skill sets and qualifications in Indigenous Land Management.

Transformation into the Indigenous Land Management Training package

- Excising the current Indigenous Land Management units of competency and qualifications from the AHC10 Training Package
- Co-development of the existing RTD02 Conservation and Land Management Training Package transitioning into the formation of a new Indigenous Land Management Training Package to sit alongside the proposed AHC10 Training Package.

Formation of an Indigenous Industry Skills Council

- The formation of a twelfth Industry Skills Council – the Indigenous Industry Skills Council. The Indigenous Industry Skills Council would facilitate the required Indigenous representation for VET sector operations across the national framework and at the strategic level needed for effective representation.
- Establishment of a new Indigenous Land Management Training Package as a core business focus of the Indigenous Industry Skills Council.

There is only one proposal that pulls all of the threads together: the formation of an Indigenous Industry Skills Council to manage the development and maintenance of the new Training Package. This new national organisation would provide a direct focus on Indigenous skills and workforce development and planning.

NSWALC is advocating the establishment of a national Indigenous Industry Skills Council to manage and develop an Indigenous Land Management Training Package as the best means of providing an innovative and comprehensive solution to the current Training Package dilemma.

AgriFood Training Packages and Equity issues

Summary

The scale and volume of the Equity issues involving AgriFood Skills Australia and Training Packages are extraordinary. The performance of AgriFood in Equity terms in discharging its due diligence responsibilities, consultation requirements and Training Package development portrays a picture of arrogance and a lack of accountability to stakeholders and government.

AgriFood Skills Australia has failed to meet the requirements for Equity considerations in the review and development of national Training Packages. Acceptance of the recently proposed merged AgriFood training package AHC10 will be perpetuating a structural disconnection with the only existing core Indigenous Training Package.

Permanent disengagement of key stakeholders through construction of whole-of-life barriers to training and employment will result. Permanent damage to the VET quality system will be the liability. This demonstrates a level of incompetence by the AHC10 Training Package project management and mismanagement by the relevant Industry Skills Council AgriFood Skills Australia.

There are extensive and long term Equity issues outstanding in the proposed AHC10 training Package and continuing Equity issues within the processes and methodologies used by AgriFood Skills Australia in the maintenance and development of Training Package products. An understanding of and commitment to equity is not demonstrated in the selection and structure of the Review Committees and Steering Committees, as well as the staff, management and board of AgriFood Skills Australia. Therefore the AHC10 Training Package has not met the basic core requirements for endorsement as outlined in the National Quality Council Policy for the Training Package Development and Endorsement Process.

Numerous AgriFood activities are not undertaken in a transparent and accountable manner and there are insufficient governance arrangements in place, a complete lack of independent audit capability, zero penalties for non compliance, and no existing mechanism to enforce compliance or amend funding as a direct result of non compliance.

Recommendations

- The AHC10 Training Package is not endorsed by the National Quality Council (NQC).
- The NQC independently review the design, consultation and development processes of the AHC10 Training Package.
- Best practice models of consultation are to be streamlined across ISCs as a formal process.
- Best practice models be implemented for Equity group representation on all committees directing the design, consultation, review and development of Training Packages.
- The Equity Auditor report is to be a comprehensive audit requiring documented evidence of compliance against a detailed set of rigorous Equity guidelines built into the Equity Report Template.

- The Equity Auditor is to have the forensic power to investigate issues of non compliance, evaluate the quality of evidence provided and specify remedial action required.
- An Equity Auditor should have formal auditing qualifications enabling a rigorous assessment of the quality of the processes of an Industry Skills Council.
- Quality and Equity Auditor to be prohibited from entering into commercial arrangements with Industry Skills Councils and to remain wholly independent from commercial considerations with Industry Skills Councils in relation to Quality Assurance processes related to Training Packages.
- The Quality and Equity Auditor contracts be funded through a levy enacted by the NQC.
- Corporate governance requirements be instituted for Industry Skills Councils related to the management of Training Package development process, benchmarks for consultation processes and relative financial expenditure including staffing requirements.
- The NQC adopt a risk management approach to the auditing of Industry Skills Councils in relation to performance of ISCs.

Outstanding issues with the AHC10 Training Package and component packages

Summary

The proposed merger of the three AgriFood training packages has been the avoidance mechanism for implementing the three Phase 1 and Phase 2 review recommendations.

Stakeholder feedback from these reviews has been, in practical terms, largely ignored and implementation of feedback has not been done, or has been poorly or partially done or is incomplete. The AHC10 review phase is a very poor substitute for the intensive and comprehensive reviews of the three existing training packages. The proposed AHC10 training package does not incorporate stakeholder feedback, does not represent current stakeholder need and does not have key stakeholder endorsement.

The following report documents a history of poor communications, inadequate, incomplete or nil consultation with stakeholders, non representation of key stakeholder and equity groups, and non completion of training package reviews and recommendations. The report highlights a recurrent theme of avoidance of the prescribed work for an Industry Skills Council.

The report also showcases the attributes of the corporation known as AgriFood Skills Australia for three key failings in dealing with client and stakeholder groups with their lack of timely action, lack of adequate or accurate responses and lack of accountability to their stakeholder groups and their controlling government authorities. The report also points to this Industry Skills Council as recalcitrant and recidivist in their haphazard and unprofessional approach to consultation of key stakeholders. It is apparent that AgriFood Skills Australia is a chronic repeat offender with respect to consultation techniques and methodologies and incorporating feedback into Training package products.

Finally the training package project management can be easily assessed as incompetent in meeting the requirements for quality training package product development. The corporate management can be evaluated as lacking in corporate governance and failing to meet key performance criteria prescribed for an Industry Skills Council.

Recommendations:

- The AHC10 Training Package not be endorsed by the National Quality Council (NQC).
- The NQC independently review the design, consultation and development processes of the AHC10 Training Package.

- AgriFood Skills Australia be held accountable to meet the requirements of the NQC Policy policy requirements for Training Package Quality Principles.
- The AHC10 Training Package be re-developed to meet the national Training Package Development Handbook guidelines.
- An independent review be undertaken to gauge stakeholder engagement and satisfaction following assurance of incorporation of stakeholder feedback.
- An independent audit be undertaken to ensure identification and consultation of key stakeholders in accordance with national best practices for ISCs.
- AgriFood Skills Australia fulfil their roles and responsibilities in the NQC-agreed processes as outlined in the [Training Package Development and Endorsement Process](#) and supporting documents.
- The AHC10 Training Package be re-submitted for endorsement following successful review and audit outcomes and following formal key stakeholder endorsement.

The Case for an Indigenous Industry Skills Council

Summary

A new approach requires an Indigenous Industry Skills Council to take ownership and control of Indigenous workforce and training package development in Australia.

The Indigenous Industry Skills Council will provide a single national Indigenous body responsible for the production and development of an Indigenous Land Management Training Package, qualifications and implementation programs for the national training system.

An Indigenous ISC would undertake the first thorough analysis of existing and emerging Indigenous job roles across the VET sector.

An Indigenous ISC will determine the degree of Indigenous participation, ownership and involvement of endorsed Indigenous Land Management Training Package products and play a key role informing other Industry Skills Councils of an Indigenous focus of Training Package development. An Indigenous ISC would perform these roles and deliver these outcomes.

The Indigenous Industry Skills Council would facilitate the required Indigenous representation for VET sector operations across the national framework and at the strategic level needed for effective representation. There is currently little effective Indigenous representation in the key decision making bodies in the VET sector.

The Indigenous Industry Skills Council can unite industry, educators and governments for action on skills and workforce development; provide industry intelligence and advice on workforce development, skills and labour needs; engage State and Territory Governments, State and Territory industry advisory bodies, peak representative bodies, Skills Australia and the National Quality Council.

An Indigenous ISC would ensure that the review of the Training Packages covers all aspects of cultural appropriateness; ensure that the Training Package Development and Review Process provides for rigorous and comprehensive national consultation; adequately addresses issues resulting from national consultation mechanisms and provide timely and publicly transparent responses; recognise the paramount importance of Indigenous staff across the VET sector; identify the requirements for Indigenous staffing in the VET sector workforce development and training systems; work with other Industry Skills Councils in providing Indigenous expertise and advice; provide an Indigenous focus in specific areas of industry coverage; be genuinely responsive to the training and employment related needs of Indigenous Australians and define the Indigenous presence at the national level for effective change to occur.

An Indigenous Land Management Training Package (ILMTP) would develop companion documentation for training program guidance, implementation and delivery systems specifying Indigenous participation in implementation and directly increasing Indigenous employment in the provision of training and administration services. An ILMTP would include mandatory requirements for RPL that will reduce the resources wasted on travel and accommodation, minimise loss of labour productivity of Indigenous workers and abolish the training obligation for repetitious and unnecessary coursework.

The outcomes from an Indigenous Land Management Training Package will improve the participation, retention and completion rates of learners and allow a ready increase in attainment of higher Certificate levels than is currently achieved with existing programs which are maintaining a low rate of achievement and require innovative solutions.

A stipulation of bilingual delivery of specified units of competency will provide a strong focus on mandatory bilingual delivery for entire programs as determined by the local community needs and will enable Indigenous and non Indigenous trainers to be empowered to deliver culturally appropriate programs.

Recognition and utilisation of the role of Elders in the provision of Indigenous training will increase the capacity of communities for ownership and involvement in relevant training and assessment processes, will develop Indigenous staff capacity in the national VET sector with impact at the remote community level and will provide educational employment roles in delivery and assessment for Indigenous trainers, mentors, translators and cultural advisors.

Recommendations:

- A single national Indigenous body responsible for the production and development of an Indigenous industry Training Package, Indigenous qualifications and training implementation programs for the national training system.
- The analysis of existing and emerging Indigenous job roles across the VET sector.
- The development of units of competency with focus on the Indigenous job roles, industry and local community outcomes of existing and traditional land use, land maintenance, eco-services and land management.
- The development of culturally appropriate products for use in the national training system with a suite of new units of competency, Skill Sets and qualifications;
- One organisation determining the degree of Indigenous participation, ownership and involvement of endorsed Indigenous Land Management Training Package products.
- A Training Package development and review process ensuring comprehensive national consultation of Indigenous peoples.
- One authority to advise and inform an Indigenous focus of Training Package development with the other ISCs.
- One authority providing a comprehensive training and job skills solution for Indigenous people.
- One institution to showcase the development of Indigenous capacity to design, develop, maintain and audit endorsed training package product, services and support materials.