

Senate Inquiry into Industry Skills Councils

(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 have a level of concern in relation to the Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council and its role and effectiveness in the operation of the national training system.

The current situation in which the ISC is forced to “modify” training packages to suit the requirement of the NQC is one example of where there is a disconnect between industry needs and national training system requirements.

Much feedback has been provided to the ISC to indicate that there was little or no support from industry to meet the requirements. Unfortunately, the ISC is required to address the NQC directive at the risk of losing industry engagement. The consistency required to ensure standardised care is received by all Australians is at risk due to a broad brush policy initiative. While the CS & H ISC has undertaken a great deal of work to develop business case arguments to gain exemptions the additional work on industry to support the process of meeting or seeking alternative arrangements has been onerous.

The complexity of the training package also feeds industry concerns with the ISCs ability to be effective. The limited and/or absence of delivery, assessment & learner resources limits the ability of industry to gain access to skills development opportunities.

Whilst the ISC develops some resources on a fee for service basis, the effort that is required by RTOs and industry to align the components of the training packages i.e. the performance criteria with the skills and knowledge is overwhelming! This should be a seamless process where by if industry chooses to use the components of the training package to assist their staff in RPL processes it is not as arduous as the current situation demands. Industry is faced with the role of working through training package requirements and aligning them to the workplace activities/tasks. It is therefore clearly understandable as to why this process is still underutilised.

This is a key role for the ISC to make the information more “industry/user” friendly. The ISC appears to be pushed into being required to undertake an increasing number of “*fee for service*” activities (workshops, resource development, other project initiatives). These activities are often expensive to attend or purchase

and detract from assisting with the development of skills based initiatives to support the current and future industry skills needs.

The level of duplication is also a concern. The ISC requests feedback/information and others request feedback on content and issues regularly covering the same ground. Industry stakeholders complain of increasing requirements for feedback/involvement that could be more seamlessly managed if there was greater State and National co operation.

The ISC has restricted ability to engage at a regional level and although there have been attempts at activities in Victoria across the regional areas, this is very limited. The needs of industry and other VET stakeholders are not adequately serviced and could be improved through State and National co operation.

The need of the industry to be supported with workforce development initiatives is a large and growing requirement. The efforts of the ISC in this area have been limited and further activities would be encouraged.

Transparency in the content and progress of the continuous improvement process would be a welcomed initiative.

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

We have no knowledge of the accountability processes associated with the Commonwealth funding arrangements for ISC projects and programs.

(c) corporate governance arrangements of ISCs;

We have little knowledge of the corporate governance arrangements of the ISC.

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

No comment

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

We have been disappointed in the inability to network and gain the co operation of the ISC in any meaningful manner. It is noted that there has been more positive engagement over the last six months. The ongoing co operation and support needs to be supported and embedded within the guidelines of operating processes as a component of receiving federal funding.

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

No comment

(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

No comment

(h) any related matters.

No comment