

23 July 2010

Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Inquiry into Industry Skills Councils

The following observations are made in my capacity as Chair of the Financial Services Sector Advisory Committee (SAC) of Innovation and Business Skills Australia (IBSA), and as General Manager Member Knowledge with the National Institute of Accountants.

The observations do not reflect the views of the above SAC or members of the SAC and are limited to experiences of a single Industry Skills Council: that of IBSA.

Pluses

1. IBSA officers are without exception; energetic and committed.
2. The work undertaken by IBSA officers in the recently completed review of the Financial Services Training Package was completed in difficult circumstances; characterised by sometimes passionate stakeholders; many of whom held disparate views. The robust consensus driven new training package is an excellent outcome.
3. The Financial Services SAC consists of a dedicated core of energetic and engaged members drawn from the financial services sector.

Challenges

1. Anecdotally, public awareness and engagement with IBSA seems low. For example, few if any of the writer's colleagues within the profession are aware of IBSA and its work; and it is not clear that SME employers and employees have an understanding of the role of IBSA and how it may impact them in a tangible way. Those with only a passing knowledge of IBSA may be more cynical than is either reasonable or necessary.
2. There appears to be an absence of clarity around what, in real terms, an ISC such as IBSA should or can do. This absence of clarity finds its way to the SAC with the result that industry groups often send different representatives to SAC meetings.
3. IBSA consists of six quite distinct SACs with activities spread across banking, commerce, education, IT, and the arts and printing sectors. It will accordingly always be difficult for IBSA as an entity to identify areas of common interest; with the result that discussions involving SAC chairs can only be high level and relatively unfocussed. Obvious structural differences mean there will be very little common ground when considering labour force and skill issues. At the ISC level, issues of legitimate importance to a particular SAC may not receive deserved consideration.
4. It is unclear how IBSA 'fits' with other industry groups.
5. There is no evidence to the writer that states and territories; or rural and regional concerns are specifically addressed.

Lloyd Driscoll
General Manager Member Knowledge, National Institute of Accountants
Chair, Financial Services Sector Advisory Committee
Phone 03 8665 3145

NATIONAL OFFICE

Level 6
555 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne VIC 3000
Australia

GPO Box 1637
Melbourne VIC 3001
Australia

Telephone
61 3 8665 3100
Facsimile:
61 3 8665 3130

Email:
natoffice@nia.org.au

www.nia.org.au

ABN 81 004 130 643