



NSWALC Submission Volume 3

Briefing Document:

The Case for an Indigenous Industry Skills Council

Senate Inquiry into Industry Skills Councils



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The Case for an Indigenous Industry Skills Council

Executive Summary

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

The Indigenous Industry Skills Council will provide a single national Indigenous body responsible for the integration of structural skill development into broader workforce development activities and 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 Training Package products and play a key role informing Industry Skills Councils of an Indigenous focus on Training Packages. 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 ISC can provide industry intelligence and advice on workforce development, skills and labour needs; engage State and Territory Governments, 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 of Indigenous peoples; adequately address 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 of VET.

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 certificates levels than is currently achieved with existing programs. 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.

Industry Skills Councils

As pivotal change agents within the national training system, the mandate of Australia's Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) is a common industry-led agenda for action on skills and workforce development. www.isc.org.au

The competitiveness and productivity of every organisation is regarded as being highly dependent on having access to the required skills – today and in the future.

The formal roles of Industry Skills Councils are to:

- 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 and [Skills Australia](#), in their area of industry coverage;
- undertake research and project work to enhance industry productivity and participation in the workforce;
- develop and maintain nationally endorsed training products and services including national Training Packages;
- produce an annual Environmental Scan on the factors shaping and impacting on industry workforce development;
- provide independent skills, workforce, education and training needs advice to enterprises and matching identified needs with best-practice solutions;
- advise governments on VET reform and related policy impediments;
- update Training Packages and their implementation in delivering job-ready people and enhancing enterprise capability with a transparent program of continuous improvement in strict adherence to the [Training Package Development Handbook](#);
- work with enterprises, employment service providers, Registered Training Organisations and government to facilitate and allocate training places under the [Productivity Places Program](#). adapted from www.isc.org.au

Industry Skills Councils are:

- recognised and funded by the Australian Government through DEEWR;
- governed by independent, industry-led boards;
- registered and constituted as not-for-profit companies limited by guarantee.

Joint Work

Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) work collaboratively and collectively to produce consolidated, formal advice to government on contemporary issues that affect industry's skill needs.

Some examples are:

- [Environmental Sustainability: An industry response](#);
- [Training Packages \[a story less told\]](#);
- [Creating Australia's Future: Together](#).

Areas of expertise

Industry Skills Councils have significant resources for capturing data and information to validate enterprise cases for critical training support from government to:

- integrate capacity building and core skill development into broader workforce development activities;

- promote the use of skills sets and unit clusters as an effective means of providing entry to and sustainable pathways within industry and community sectors;
- provide support for registered training organisations (RTOs) to implement effective strategies addressing their core skills in training and assessment practices;
- produce high quality Training Package product for use in their related industry sectors;
- ensure stakeholder engagement and satisfaction for the diverse range of industry clients.

Skills Councils must provide for a truly flexible and increasingly skilled workforce; bridge the divide between our nation's industry and the often complex vocational education and training environment, achieve industry's skill needs, providing focus, coherence, independence, extensive networks and real industry leadership.¹



Source: Department of Education, Science and Training (2007).

Industry Skills Councils' KPIs

Specifically, the Industry Skills Councils' activities seek to support the five guiding principles for building the national training system whilst simultaneously delivering on priorities of the National Quality Council and DEST's five key performance indicators. For the purposes of this report, the five KPIs have been listed as they appear in ISC funding agreements.

The 'big five' are¹:

1. Progress against the Training Package priority areas, particularly the rationalisation of the number of Training Packages, incorporation of employability skills, and development of cross industry competencies;
2. Strong engagement with small, medium and large enterprises and State advisory bodies;
3. Formal consultative mechanisms with Training Providers and equity groups, including through ISC membership or other methods of engagement;
4. Effective support mechanisms for Registered Training Organisations seeking to deliver and customise Training Packages;
5. Strong links with the National Quality Council

Areas of Operations

ISCs operate across broad areas of Australia's industries and training systems within the VET sector. An Industry Skills Council (ISC) is the one corporation that can integrate the training-work system and connect most of the links between training - work skills - community skills - relevant skill sets - qualifications - job roles - training implementation - work outcomes - employment outcomes and community outcomes. This is the role of a Training Package.

Arguably the number one KPI for ISCs is the rationalisation of Training Packages, and importantly the qualifications and units of competency which they comprise. ¹

Training Packages in the VET system

A training package is a nationally endorsed and recognised set of integrated component documents for training and assessment for a specific industry, industry sector or enterprise that can be used for developing and recognising people's competencies.

Training Packages are the national standards for the training and assessment industry.

The Training Package basic components are qualifications, skill sets and units of competency (UOCs). The qualifications describe the job roles of Australian workers and are built from the building blocks of units of competency and skill sets. Skill Sets are a specific cluster of units of competency. The units of competency describe specific work outcomes within each job role and are the core units of the national training system that we know as VET.

An ISC is the organisation that connects the worker and the training by matching the job role qualification with the training qualification. After intensive and comprehensive national consultation, an ISC develops and maintains the documents that describe the job roles and work outcomes of an industry worker, and compile this set of documents into a Training Package.

Why the Need for an Indigenous Industry Skills Council?

A short Indigenous summary

The job roles and work outcomes of Indigenous workers have not been defined nor described as appropriate qualifications within the relevant Training Packages. The Indigenous competencies have yet to be developed and realised as valuable contributions to the Australian economy. The training completion rates particularly for Certificate III and higher have not improved and structural barriers exist towards meaningful training. The VET system has failed to recognise the existing value and productivity of Indigenous Australian workers and failed to provide a national training system with an Indigenous focus.

A new approach is needed.

An Indigenous solution

An Indigenous Industry Skills Council can control, guide and implement the six priorities of Partners in a direct and effective manner through ownership and self determination of a Training Package with an Indigenous focus:

1. Building the Indigenous capacity of the VET sector
2. Creating meaningful pathways for participation
3. Improving the fragmented funding frameworks
4. Providing culturally appropriate product development, design and delivery
5. Linking training directly to employment outcomes
6. Improving VET, community and industry consultation and implementation systems.

A brief Indigenous VET history

The fragmented nature of the VET system allows Indigenous focus to be lost easily amongst the complexity of issues and the confusion of conflicting considerations.

- A satisfactory increase in involvement of Indigenous people in decision making about policy, planning, development of product, development of resources and methods of delivery, has not occurred;
- A corresponding satisfactory result in providing and receiving Indigenous advice across the key VET organisations has not occurred;
- VET organisations are deprived of Indigenous perspectives, advice and workplace participation as a routine part of their operations.

Indigenous participation and advice does not have a direct and local impact in the design, development and delivery of VET. There has been even less progress in increasing the number of Indigenous employees in VET.²

The Indigenous Industry Skills Solution

There is currently no single national Indigenous body responsible for the production and development of Indigenous qualifications and implementation programs for the national training system. There is no organisation determining the degree of Indigenous participation, ownership and involvement of endorsed Training Package products. There is no existing corporation with the authority to advise and oversee the ISCs for Indigenous focus of Training Package development.

There is no authority providing a comprehensive training and job skills solution for Indigenous people. An Indigenous ISC will perform these roles and deliver these outcomes.

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

Given the marginal attachment of many Indigenous people to the labour market, one might have expected a comprehensive Indigenous employment and training package to meet the Closing the Gap goal and insulate Indigenous Australians from recession: none has been forthcoming.³

An Indigenous ISC provides for self determination of Training Packages from the top down and ownership of the program and involvement from the ground up:

- the Indigenous focus will underpin every action taken;
- the Indigenous capacity will be increased with every decision made;
- Indigenous ownership and involvement will be built in to the design and development process;
- Indigenous employees and consultants will advise on every aspect of the VET sector as an equal participant in VET sector decision-making.

This means engaging the interest and transforming the practices of everyone involved in designing, developing, delivering and receiving VET, as well as people in the communities and industries VET aims to serve. The point is that implementing Partners is not just a matter of implementing the Blueprint Actions. It also means changing many minds and lives. It requires creating a different culture, different kinds of social relations, and different kinds of ideas about identity than exist in many places in Australia today.¹

An Indigenous ISC will be:

- ensuring that the review of the Training Packages covers all aspects of cultural appropriateness;
- ensuring that the Training Package Development and Review Process provides for rigorous and comprehensive national consultation, adequately addresses issues resulting from national consultation mechanisms and provides timely and publicly transparent responses;
- recognising the paramount importance of Indigenous staff across the VET sector and determining the requirements for Indigenous staffing in the VET sector workforce development and training systems;
- working with other Industry Skills Councils in providing Indigenous expertise and advice
- genuinely responsive to the training and employment related needs of Indigenous Australians;
- defining the Indigenous presence at the national level for effective change to occur.

Implementation and delivery

Training program implementation and delivery systems can be specified in the Training Package that:

- will require Indigenous participation in implementation as subject matter experts, mentors, advisors, assessors and trainers;
 - and will directly increase Indigenous employment in the provision of training and administration services
- will provide mandatory requirements for RPL that will
 - reduce the resources wasted on travel and accommodation;
 - minimise loss of labour productivity of Indigenous workers;
 - abolish the training obligation for repetitious and unnecessary coursework;

- improve the participation, retention and completion rates of learners;
 - allow a ready increase in attainment of higher certificates levels than is currently achieved.
- stipulate bilingual delivery of specified units of competency and provide a strong focus on mandatory bilingual delivery for entire programs as determined by the local community to:
 - recognise and utilise the role of Elders in the provision of Indigenous training;
 - increase the capacity of communities for ownership and involvement in relevant training and assessment processes;
 - develop Indigenous staff capacity in the national VET sector with impact at the remote community level;
 - provide educational employment roles in delivery and assessment for Indigenous trainers, mentors, translators and cultural advisors.

This reaffirms in my mind the importance of addressing issues at a systemic level (across the whole training system – and in every state and territory) if we are to make a difference.⁴

Culturally appropriate mechanisms

Cultural appropriateness and flexible delivery are about giving individuals and communities far greater control over what training is provided, when, where, how and by whom. This is essential to establishing relevant pathways for Indigenous Australians.

The mid-term review identified the need to place a stronger focus on organisations providing industry and training advice. These organisations need to develop well-defined mechanisms for involving Indigenous Australians to ensure that the advice they give to governments and the decisions they make about training, reflect the needs and aspirations of Indigenous Australians and their communities.⁵

Kemmis et al (2006) suggest that a community development approach, rather than one driven by bureaucratic pressures, is most likely to build the Indigenous VET workforce. ⁶

A community approach is outlined for the design, development and delivery of VET products and services that:

- are community initiated, designed and finalised;
- stipulate guidance, input and final approval from community elders;
- have built in participation of Elders as facilitators, industry experts, translators, trainers and assessors for all delivery and assessment mechanisms
- include facilitation by local respected organisations with extensive networks in the relevant community areas;
- ensure mandatory bilingual delivery where appropriate and compulsory Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) availability and use where appropriate;
- include bilingual units of competency, skill sets and qualifications where this is achievable;
- enable co-operation from a distance and provision of technical assistance when requested for technical matters relating to training packages;
- allow facilitation through online collaborative workspaces where available.

Product development

Nationally endorsed Training Package products and services provide for:

- 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;

- 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 the relevant Indigenous qualifications to identified job roles;
- the identification of Indigenous UOCs from existing Training packages and the importation of selected units of competency from Training Packages with relevant endorsed product to Indigenous work outcomes;
- relevant qualifications will meet the immense diversity of work outcomes and cultural roles that are required for both urban Indigenous workers and remote outstation workers;
- qualifications that contain the highest flexibility of packaging structure in the general qualifications at all levels of Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) alignment;
- Skill Sets that meet the needs of local communities.

'What are the factors required for Indigenous Australians to achieve positive outcomes from training?'

There is unequivocal evidence that the single most important factor in assisting in the achievement of the full range of positive outcomes from VET for Indigenous students is Indigenous community ownership and involvement.⁷

VET Funding

VET has failed to deliver a simple and effective funding model for roll out of appropriate training programs. Instead the VET system has produced a complex and counter productive array of multiple overlapping funding and implementation programs that take months to research and access, months to determine eligibility and months to administer. Up to two-thirds of the funding is lost in the facilitation of the implementation and only one third is comprised of effective training. Improving the minefield of funding complexity will be a protracted and ongoing battle. The ISC will be ideally placed to effect negotiations with Federal, State and Territory Governments, State and Territory industry advisory bodies and peak representative bodies to simplify and streamline the complex of funding arrangements.

Indigenous representation

There is no Indigenous representation in the key decision making bodies in the VET sector that 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 and [Skills Australia](#), in their area of industry coverage;
- provide an Indigenous focus for VET sector operations at the national level.

Supporting Indigenous employment

A recent report by Giddy, Lopez and Redman (2009)⁸ highlights the factors leading to successful employment outcomes for Indigenous people. The research identified the essential and desirable criteria necessary to support successful outcomes for Indigenous employees. The essential criteria are:

- * having strong vision and understanding the importance of monitoring targets
- * responding to the employment market
- * maintaining strong relationships with community and business
- * offering 'job related' and culturally appropriate training
- * collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and the community

- * providing holistic support
- * ensuring strong staff commitment.

The importance of the presence of Indigenous staff across the VET sector is paramount; a steady decline in Indigenous staff numbers remains a key issue that must be addressed by VET systems and providers. 6

Capacity building:

The development of Indigenous capacity to design, develop, produce, maintain and audit endorsed training package product, services and support materials that meets the needs of Indigenous Australian workers and Indigenous communities is critical to the achievement of Indigenous aspirations in the VET sector.

The creation of specific Indigenous employment to perform the work done by training and assessment providers/specialists, administration employees/management, Training Package staff/consultants and Quality Assurance consultants, auditors and editors, initiates the process of building capacity for workforce and skills development.

An Indigenous ISC will initiate a chain reaction of Indigenous employment that is sustainable given the mountains of work to be done in the Indigenous VET sector and the Indigenous labour resources are available, willing and able to participate on the ground in the communities at the precise locations where the employment is in urgent need of development opportunities.

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7. NCVER (National Centre for Vocational Education Research), 'Aspects of training that meet Indigenous Australians’ aspirations': A systematic review of research, pp 24-40, Cydde Miller, Australian Government 2005.
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