



5 August, 2010

Committee Secretary
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE INDUSTRY SKILLS COUNCILS INQUIRY
REGARDING THE ROLE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF AGRIFOOD SKILLS
AUSTRALIA**

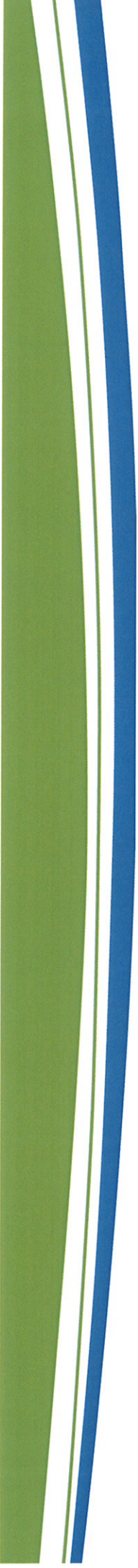
C.Y. O'Connor Institute (CYOC) is the major public provider of Vocational Education and Training (VET) services in the Wheatbelt region of Western Australia. The Institute respectfully wishes to make the following submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Industry Skills Councils (ISC) with respect to Agrifood Skills Australia (ASA), the ISC with responsibility for providing industry intelligence on current and future skills needs and training requirements for the national agrifoods industries.

From the perspective of CYOC, our dealings with Agrifood Skills Australia lead us to the view that ASA is fundamentally an effective organisation with a clearly defined role which, since its formation, has served to facilitate broad cross-industry collaboration and leadership regarding skills and workforce development. Staff at CYOC involved with the ISC have developed excellent working relationships with staff at ASA, which in turn has served to fulfill the stated purposes of ASA and assist the Institute with the delivery of well trained, job ready people to the agrifoods industry.

Particular areas where input from Agrifood Skills Australia has been of value are:

- Professional development of practitioners delivering training packages;
- Maintaining currency/industry relevance of training packages;
- Facilitating consultative meetings between training deliverers and industry;
- Acting in a coordinating role across education and training sectors (i.e. public and private schooling systems, public and private training providers, different sectors of the industry and so forth); and
- Greatly improving communications between diverse elements of the industry.

Notwithstanding these notable successes however, staff at CYOC believe that adjustments with respect to the role of ASA may be forthcoming to increase effectiveness. In particular these areas include:

- 
- The ASA should urgently address governance difficulties regarding conflicting ethical positions contained in industry training packages and those espoused by associated professional bodies. There are ongoing concerns that units within specific training packages are not consistent with associated professional ethics. In areas such as veterinary nursing/animal care for example, the ongoing failure to address governance and ethical issues puts lecturers at risk of disbarment from working in the industry if found delivering training inconsistent with professional standards.
 - The size of agricultural output and diversity of cultivating environments in Western Australia justifies an increase in the size of staffing and funding for the ASA in this State. The efficiency and effectiveness of an ISC does not appear materially enhanced through Eastern States Centres receiving disproportionately more organisational resourcing. The ASA Board may wish to reconsider its funding and staffing priorities in light of industry output rather than population distribution.

C.Y. O'Connor Institute trusts this submission will be useful in the deliberations of the Senate Industry Skills Councils Inquiry. Please contact me directly if further clarity is required concerning any of the issues raised here.

Yours sincerely

John Scott
Managing Director