

The  
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### **Support For Workers Over 45 Years**

#### Our profile

I am the President of the National Business Institute of Australia. We are a private sector TAFE institute established for the primary purpose of assisting unqualified members of the Australian workforce to obtain relevant and appropriate qualifications for their past workplace learning. We are a new business enterprise. We have a national assessment licence for issuing a range of TAFE business qualifications in management, marketing, accounting, information technology and workplace training. The key to understanding our perspective is that we offer the opportunity of 100% academic credit for workplace learning without any requirement for additional classroom training.

#### Why Help the 45 + Workers

##### **1. Overseas Benchmarks**

We consider there is compelling evidence to look at helping the 45+ workers to obtain qualifications that recognise the depth and scope of their workplace learning. The 1998 OECD statistics [cited by ANTA chairman Mr S Homery] show the picture clearly: only 53% of Australians take out post-secondary qualifications whereas the United States, the world leader, has a comparable rate of 86%. [see attachment A]

We note too that Singapore, long regarded as one of the smart countries in terms of workforce education and development, has introduced a School of Lifelong Learning to deal with this issue. [see attachment B].

There are numerous other reports [see attachment C] that indicate Australia has a long way to go to be internationally competitive in this area of workforce competency and formal qualifications. We consider that the 1995 Karpin Report on Australian Management and Leadership trends added strength to these arguments.

##### **2. Our Experience**

My business partner Geoffrey Baring and I have a cumulative history of more than 40 years working in the field of workforce development and education in both Australia and overseas. I am a former university Professor of Business and TAFE Institute

Director. In these roles I have had the personal experience of observing numbers of people who do not make it through the current formal classroom processes and therefore lack qualifications and confidence in their competencies. In fact, I have even been in charge of selection processes that exclude some of these people. There are three basic reasons why such exclusion occurs:

- candidates cannot meet the formal entry criteria
- candidates cannot find the time in their lives to put into classroom training
- candidates cannot get excited about having to study things they already know.

This is a sad and unfortunate result because most of the 45+ group have more skills than is required for the actual qualification and its learning outcomes [attachment D].

### **3. Our customer research**

Our own research indicates that the 45+ age group are the least likely to have such vocational qualifications as they were raised in an era when jobs were freely available and access to formal vocational training or scholarship was restricted and not strongly encouraged outside of the technical trade areas. Further, we have found from our customers that this is the same group that are very self-conscious about this lack of qualifications at a time when their children are graduating from TAFE institutes and universities. Again, this is a sad and unfortunate result because this cohort usually has an abundance of skills that simply lack recognition.

Our research also shows a lack of satisfaction with the Recognition of Prior Learning processes of our TAFE Institutes and Universities. Put simply, 100% academic credit is not available from these formal training institutions. Academic recognition of workplace skills is not their core business and workplace learning recognition ultimately attacks their customer base by denying them classroom training hours. So there is a clear need for the kind of non-government funded service that we offer. Our competitive edge comes from a strong emphasis on working with the customer to map their skills and then fit the qualification to their profile rather than try to change the candidate until they fit the formal qualification which can be a very demeaning process.

### **3. The Benefits**

The attached brochure outlines numerous benefits from this 100% academic credit option for workplace learning. They are

- Improve opportunities for promotion
- Enhance outplacement preparation
- Add value to Total Quality people management
- Improve job recruitment prospects
- Raise self-confidence

### **National Business Institute of Australia**

- Provide a system for life-long learning recognition
- Provide a basis for skill based pay remuneration
- Empowerment of unqualified workers
- Job and labour market flexibility
- Recognition of all life experience

Support for workers with disabilities  
Easy step pathway to higher qualifications  
Credibility in social and family circles

### **Private or Public Sector Service Type**

We consider this type of service should remain the preserve of the private sector because it relies heavily on a strong sensitivity to the needs of the individual customer and the not the development of the institution or broader policy initiatives. The traditional education institutions have had ample opportunity to look at developing this side of their operations and they have failed to do so consistently. We believe that such a lack of service occurs because non-classroom recognition is not their core business. Nor should it be! These established public providers do training and they do it well. We would not favour funding the current public providers to shift their focus. It could lead to massive confusion for customers and the institutions themselves at a time when Australia needs to be positively enhancing its vocational flexibility in order to remain globally competitive.

### **Our Recommendations**

We consider there are two actions that need to be taken to improve the lot of many 45+ workers.

#### **#1 Publicity Campaign.**

A major and sustained campaign should be made by federal government to tell 45+ workers of this new pathway to qualifications for workplace learning. Such publicity would build confidence in this new approach as well as providing the 45+ workers with a lifelong learning pathway that will give them qualifications. Neither TAFEs nor universities have any incentive to tell the 45+ group of this new avenue of recognition as it would threaten their current marketshare and brand images.

#### **#2 Access to Superannuation Funds**

The cost of accessing a Diploma in Management by our method costs \$3 000 [\$110 per subject x 24 plus a \$500 enrolment fee]. We are finding that prospective customers cannot get access to such funds immediately even though they are keen to invest in this way in their future. We suggest that a mechanism should be established for workers to draw down a loan from their superannuation funds for a period of 5 years, interest free. Our logic is transparent. Investment in this sort of educational process is a very important career and lifestyle milestone.

#### **#3 Skills Passport**

We think the system wide extension of this process would involve a skills passport. We know how to develop such a tangible recording system but funds need to be made available to take our concepts and prototypes through the pilot and marketing testing stages of Research and Development. We estimate that this process would cost between \$400,000 and \$750,000.

### **Further Information**

If the Committee desires further information on these matters then we would be more than happy to assist.

Yours faithfully,

Murray Cree  
President  
B. A., M. A.,  
C.Q.S.W. WkPI Trainer Cert IV

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