

**FISHING INDUSTRY TRAINING
BOARD OF TASMANIA (INC.)**



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Committee Secretary
Australian Senate References Committee

Inquiry into future & current skills needs

Determining Skills shortages;

The criteria used by the State and Commonwealth would appear to be different. Little reference is made to State reports in determining Commonwealth rural & regional skills shortages. The Tasmanian Industry Audits for example do not appear to be used when determining qualifications that attract the "rural & regional skills shortage" payments to employers of New Apprenticeships. Why the employers of New Apprentices undertaking aquaculture qualifications are eligible only in Tasmania and not other states where the skills shortages are equal or greater seems inequitable. In SA the tuna sector alone is worth in excess of 300 million dollars and demand for skilled farm hands is enormous yet no skills shortage incentives are available to employers. Perhaps it's as simple as we asked they did not! Not a great system for driving the skills of Australian workers upwards!

Existing workers

The Commonwealth incentive payments have funded a huge proportion of training package qualifications across all industries in all states. These incentive payments are often used for the upskilling of existing workers who are not usually eligible for State "User Choice" funding. Without these funds many existing workers would be denied access to training! In the Seafood industry in Tasmania existing workers take most of our New Apprentice places. Industry has argued long and hard that existing workers should not be disadvantaged when considering formal training. Remember that new employees get both the Commonwealth incentives and the State funds! Under the current system the cut off (3 months full time or 12 months casual) that determines whether an employee's placement in a New Apprenticeship is State funded or not appears arbitrary and not in anyone's interests. Encouraging employment is worthwhile but not at the expense of your current workforce.

Wild catch sector;

These are the traditional fishermen. Catchers of Rock Lobster, Abalone &, Trawl Fish to name a few. The skills requirements of this sector has and continues to be difficult to address for many reasons. The primary reason is that fishermen are often not considered employees as they are often engaged under a share of catch arrangement. This arrangement effectively stops most Australian fishermen from becoming New Apprentices or engaging New Apprentices. The uptake of the Seafood Training Package by fishermen has been negligible. We need more flexible funding criteria to enable this group to take advantage of the opportunities offered to other workers. Areas such as occupational health & safety offer real challenges to this sector.

Training Delivery;

The amounts paid by the various states for qualifications from industry training packages vary hugely. For example in Tasmania for delivering a certificate III in the SFI aquaculture the training provider will be paid approximately \$4,000.00 in NSW \$1,500.00 and in SA over \$5,000.00. The same qualification to the same sector! The training provider in NSW has much less flexibility than his SA or Tasmanian equivalent in addressing the clients training requirements.

Collection of advice;

The traditional source of advice on skills shortages was the state and national ITAB network. Recent budget cuts have resulted in the demise of most Tasmanian ITABS. In most other states these bodies have been amalgamated into compatible groupings and nationally the new combinations will be called "skills Councils." The collection of information relating to skills shortages would appear to be fragmented and even less likely to be responsive to industries needs than in the past. Different states have different arrangements and industries are not always in the same groupings. For example in Queensland Transport & Seafood are together, nationally the likely grouping is Rural, Meat, Seafood & Meat, in the NT Rural & Seafood are together, in Tas ITAB status has been revoked and so on.

The best forum for industry to present its case for determining & prioritising training is through the ITAB system where both employer and employee opinions were heard and nearly always in agreement over training issues. (At least in the Seafood industry in Tasmania!)

Employee and employer interests need to be balanced to ensure the training delivered is in the interests of everyone. Portability of qualifications is some times contentious with some wanting state, sector or even enterprise specific qualifications. Any thing less than a fully portable qualification is hardly ever in the interest of the employee. Determining training needs requires vigorous debate by both employer & employees on a regular basis in a forum dedicated to that purpose to be current, accurate & effective. I am not at all confident that the new training advisory arrangements offer these opportunities.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely

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