

**SENATE EMPLOYMENT AND WORKPLACE RELATIONS AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE
INQUIRY INTO CURRENT AND FUTURE SKILLS**

Attention: Margaret Blood

I accept the invitation to the roundtable discussion and will attend.

Gulf Savannah Development interests:

a) Areas of skills shortage and b) training policies, programs and delivery in the remote area.

a) Skills shortages

Main source of income for the immediate future is deemed to be tourism, hence the skills requirements relate to that industry. Emphasis for the Gulf region is on capacity building; one on one training, coaching and mentoring. Areas of need include small business development, IT, management, customer services and hospitality. The main difficulty is getting affordable training to the people who need it.

b) Effectiveness of government education, training and employment policies and programs for meeting current and future skills needs.

❑ **Access to Registered Training Providers**

Because of the distance and the sparse population it is expensive to deliver training in the region. As a consequence, there are a limited number of RTO's prepared to deliver training services.

❑ **Public training providers**

Access

The presence of Registered Training Organisations (RTO's) in the Gulf Region is limited with Mt. Isa TAFE being the only one, operating through the Lower Gulf College at Normanton. GSD has experienced a disappointing response from TAFE in tendering for local Gulf training.

In the past most training for residents was sourced outside the region, requiring people to travel away from their place of residence and/or work and placing an additional burden in terms of time and expense. Costs of travel and accommodation can be prohibitive with inadequate support services available in the larger centres.

Funding Policies

Competition in training delivery will be restricted if the bulk of funding is directed through TAFE. Local private providers feel they are being squeezed out of access to training funding. Communities and indigenous groups feel they should be able to select the trainer of their choice. Smaller, independent training providers can tailor the courses to meet the needs of the community.

❑ **Training delivery**

There are several factors operating here:

Class size: Small numbers are involved in remote areas, therefore RTO policies must accommodate smaller than norm classes/groups.

Relevance of training and different needs -

- Business owners do not seek accredited training; however training is needed to enhance performance and enable them to participate in e-commerce, e-democracy
- Trainees and apprentices - coaching and mentoring rather than training in larger groups are far more effective; accredited training is required for this group.

Cost of delivery - costs could be reduced in the longer term by adopting strategies that build the capacity of a region to manage its own training.

Current and Future Skills Needs

❑ Delivery methods people prefer:

GSD's experience is that the training environment needs to accommodate the individual. Gulf residents have made it clear they prefer: face to face coaching and mentoring; in their own location, if possible and specific training they have targeted.

❑ Individual training needs

Many small business operators do not want or need accredited training. They simply want assistance to improve their businesses. Their employees on the other hand usually seek accredited training. The system should be sufficiently flexible to enable all needs to be met.

❑ Seasonal impacts

There is a need to review the process to allow portability over time and locality. Training is not freely available for casual employees in the tourism industry and other seasonal industries in the region. Traineeships are not an option for seasonal workers, as the traineeship process does not readily accommodate seasonal work patterns.

❑ Training with no job outcome

One of the major problems with training programs is that they are often short lived with a limited chance of getting relevant employment. This is particularly the case with indigenous communities. Training that is allied to job creation strategies is far more effective in the long term.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Funding policies

- High percentage of the funding available to go to smaller independent training agencies with less concentration in the TAFE arena
- Greater flexibility for remote area application enabling funding to go to non-RTO agencies where accreditation is not the key imperative for training
- Accommodation of seasonal impacts
- Transferable across the region(s)

2) Review of training programs and mechanisms for remote/regional areas

a) Meeting community needs – local workplace assessors

People prefer one on one coaching/mentoring; training to be delivered in their own location. There is a need to maximise the limited resources available. One way is to continue providing training for local Workplace Assessors. RTO's can then use these assessors to manage their resources and achieve outcomes. Some of the funding provided to RTO's for training and assessment should be paid to local workplace assessors as encouragement for them to continue this training support as well as providing an economic boost for the region.

b). Local ownership

- Provide support for the creation of smaller regional training centres/centres of excellence, supported by local government with linkages to national bodies such as ANTA.

c) Need for ongoing evaluation

It seems that the ACC is in a pivotal position to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of education, training and employment policies and strategies and their efficacy to meet future needs.

I have no objections to release beyond committee members.

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*Gulf Savannah Development, April 2 2003
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