



## **BACKGROUND NOTES:** **for the** **Employment, Workplace Relations** **and Education References Committee.**

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### **BACKGROUND TO QITE**

- QITE Strategic Plan (Abridged) (not available publicly)

### **ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

- **DIFFICULTIES IN OPERATING USER CHOICE CONTRACT**
- The delivery of a quality service to trainees and supportive services to employers within User Choice has from our experience not been cost effective, especially when considering the administrative workload, the distances and small number of trainees in regional/remote areas. Concern that cutting corners becomes the accepted practice and the User Choice concept becomes compromised.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

- Traineeships and apprenticeships are a proven way for regional and remote people to gain further skills and much needed employment experience, however, we found that to deliver the traineeships to an acceptable standard, financial viability was impossible. There is a need to re-evaluate the process of the contract. Let trainers spend the time paid for with the trainees (not in admin work), and consider options of fair and reasonable reimbursement for travel. If Employers have good experiences with trainees and training providers, they are more likely to see training and skill acquirement as beneficial.
- **SKILLS SHORTAGES**
- The skills gaps as identified (Qld State policy) eg. reliability, self-responsibility, teamwork, flexibility, initiative, creativity and inter-personal skills, are most often not addressed to any great degree in the Training Package structure – this is intensive training that may not be seen as of value by community or industry. (Highlights really the attitudinal vs the skills) This impacts on funding possibilities as most are aimed at Training Package units, and minimum hours for delivery.

- In our area currently we see the following as required skills areas.
  - 1) Trades – Construction & Carpenters, Bricklayers etc
  - 2) Trades – Traditional i.e. Electricians, Fitters, Mechanical
  - 3) Agricultural and Horticultural Industries
  - 4) Foods – Hospitality and Interpretive Tourism

Coupled with this, the traditional rural jobs (eg. Tobacco picking) are being replaced with higher skilled positions focusing on quality, safety, and a general business focus. There is also a shortage of workers during the “harvest” months with farmers often relying on “backpacker” labor.
- The low population growth that is being experienced (particularly in rural locations) transforms to an aging population “pool” for up and coming trainees and apprentices.
- Whilst the focus is on reform of the training sectors, attention must be paid to what is being done in relation to reforming the TAFE’s and RTO’s to make their delivery of traineeships and apprenticeships more focused towards a flexible delivery instead of creating a financial burden to the employer group. The reform, instead of creating a flexible approach for TAFE’s and RTO’s, has created an environment of inflexibility, and in many cases RTO’s that have in the past been extremely successful in delivery a quality product are not able to operate and therefore ultimately exit the market.
- There is currently little evidence of ‘at the coal-face’ employers looking to take responsibility for training and up-skilling. The questions of “why is this so” needs to be investigated.
- Employment demands projected for the future (ie identified as **service, knowledge and IT**) are essential however focus also needs to be on *current* (and near future) *skills required* within region/remote areas. This is most often hands-on skills.
- IT is an identified area where skills need to be acquired. IT is costly to set up, and costly to keep current – and the logistics (population, distance, lack of transport) makes this difficult to provide by community/private providers. There is a concern that the most disadvantaged will get left behind in the IT race.
- In addition to this, there is a pressing need for easy and cost effective access to current IT especially for older persons looking or forced into career changes.
- From our experience consultation seems to be most often in the form of a survey for regional/remote. These do not address the real, very different issues in regional/remote areas. Policy often disjointed from State and Commonwealth (do not always seem to be going in the same direction).

## RECOMMENDATION

- A greater emphasis in policy and funding processes on the skills that make people employable is required. There is a need for the provision within employment and training contracts for more innovative delivery of training to provide people with the ‘attitudinal’ skills. In addition, realistic timeframes for achievement must be set, especially for the most disadvantaged participants. A process of outcomes needs to be developed which is not tied rigidly to competency achievement.
- There is a requirement for more localized input from small business and local councils.

- Traineeship and Apprenticeship options need to be made more attractive to the mid 20-30's age group. Current wage conditions do not allow for a person of this age to fully support themselves in our economy. Our ageing population would also be a driving force behind the need for a greater focus on updating the skills and qualifications of existing workers and finding ways to retain skilled employees in each industry. This is not only a focus on new entrants but those who are aging in the workforce
- Focus needs to be placed firmly on the common goal of unemployment; and therefore the objective would be to enable **all** jobseekers to access the funded programs (whether state or federal) therefore making the opportunities to fulfill such shortages a positive step in reducing a social and economic issue.
- There are many and various State and Federal programs which offer structured training and wage subsidies for skills shortage areas and the disadvantaged groups ie. Mature Age employees and indigenous employment; it currently appears that these programs are unable to be accessed by persons whom are registered as disadvantaged with the Commonwealth's Job Network Program. This causes great concern especially in rural and remote areas as employment opportunities are considerably less and are often hinged to a CJP and/or State wage funding program, and as many of these areas face high unemployment levels, the pool of "potential" jobseekers are in many cases registered with the Job Network. This then makes them ineligible to access this employment opportunity and as such the position which is available generally will remain vacant. Government supported institutions appear to have a priority, but regional and remote clients would benefit from a wider distribution to community based organizations.
- Future funding allocation will have to look at the benefits of on-going support for currency of IT in regional areas.
- A comprehensive, cohesive education program for employers may be of benefit. They need to know the benefits of investing in their staff and their industry. Investigation of a tax incentive could be considered for staff training. Delivery modes and accessibility of current training need to be assessed by employers (perhaps the cohort who currently DOES NOT have any staff in training – to find out why).
- More face to face (thanks for the opportunity today), and individual visits. In the past there has been good consultation with Industry bodies, however, these are not so visible lately. Government and industry bodies visiting training providers, community organizations and local businesses would achieve the most realistic picture of regional and remote needs.