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Education and training Workforce Study  
Productivity Commission  
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### **In Response to Vocational Education and Training Workforce (VET) Issues Paper**

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the PC's VET workforce Issues paper. As I am involved in providing training to the Australian Wine and Rural Irrigation sectors as well as coordinating our RTO's funding arrangements. Over the years the work I'm involved in from day to day has been shifting from a face to face delivery focus to more and more involvement in accessing and reporting on funding arrangements that assist industry and/or prospective workers in gaining skills to increase productivity of their existing business or in gaining qualifications that will allow them to enter into productive employment.

#### **1. The current and future demand for the workforces, and the mix of knowledge and skills required to meet service need.**

This area is an extremely difficult one to predict due to the plethora of factors impacting on industries needs for skilled labor. There are two comments I'd like to make in relation to the above.

The first one is the need for a pool of workers with strong foundation skills that should be well formed BEFORE they arrive in VET settings – i.e. numeracy, literacy and language capabilities. This was a strong theme in a regional skills summit I attended in Wagga Wagga earlier in 2010 expressed by representatives from industry, RTO's and government.

The second is that when and where fluctuations occur in the need for VET practitioners with particular skills a nationally collaborative system needs to be in place to enable the consistent development of VET workforce skills in order to meet industry and Training Package demands on the quality and efficiency of VET delivery. I am personally involved in such dilemmas within the Australian wine industries National Extension and Innovation Committee at present. Many wineries etc. have experienced the financial and social years of "terror" in terms of the industries cycles. They can see that the depleted stocks of VET, research and government agency staff will need to form the basis of capacity development for the industry in the not too distant future and that the competitive nature of not just VET but also research and consultancy businesses may stifle the rapid innovation that will be needed in order for the national industry and its employees to benefit.

Finally I'd like to see how 'older' workers within the VET sector can be better used both within their own RTO's and across industries to ensure knowledge/succession planning concerns of management and younger colleagues are met. (I see a relative expert (to me) has made a submission on this area already).

## **2. The current and future supply for the workforces.**

The development of nationally consistent workforce professional development opportunities in conjunction with industry would be invaluable for both current and future workers in the VET industry. Such Professional development opportunities would be equally valuable to technical and administrative practitioners operating within and or across the sectors.

An issue that arises from the overlap between sectors arises when VET practitioners are expected by industry to integrate the latest best practice and or research findings into existing training in order to meet unchanged competency standards. Similar concerns may arise in styles of LLN teaching between sectors of this study.

## **3. The current and future structure and mix of the workforces and their consequential efficiency and effectiveness.**

I think all three sectors being investigated in this study along with the university sector should keep records that are comparable if not consistent. There is also a need for the formation and maintenance of strategic alliances/ collaborative partnerships between all stakeholders in given the VET sector nationally. (Such structural adjustments in the sector will require parallel adjustments in funding arrangements) This will ensure early warnings related to workforce demands may be better predicted and planned for and that representatives not just from VET but also ECD, secondary and university sectors are all keeping each other informed about best practice, skills requirements and how national COAG objectives will be met.

## **4. Workforce planning, development and structure in the short, medium and long-term.**

The only comment I have after reading the material in this section is that changes to ongoing data collection should aim to increase the efficiency of accessibility to potential users, be nationally consistent across all sectors including universities. Be retrievable down to per qualification and or Training Package level and enable the appropriate data collection for any potential national data collection that will help with workforce planning.

### **Some Other points**

- VET's objective in my opinion is to increase the level of qualifications of individuals and increase the productivity of industry. I think the VET workforce should be assessed against such objectives in terms of numbers of completed Quals or skills sets demanded by industry NOT

state government agencies. The return on investment in workplace training for industry (see NZ study in Dairies) and the active involvement of industries in ECD, secondary and VET sectors.

- In regards to private sector workforce being younger I agree (with no real stats to back it up) but suggest this is to do with the use of IT in smaller RTO's in order to reduce delivery costs and gen Y'ers etc being more computer savvy.