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"Training That Saves Lives"

E.Mail Message

To: Education & Training Workforce Study

From: Greg Goulet – H₂O Pro

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Feedback on the VET Sector

H₂O Pro Pty Ltd is a small RTO which has been operating for over 13 years. We specialise in the aquatics industry delivering Training and Assessment in areas which are not “publicly funded” and which are generally not catered for by public institutions. Our training courses, whilst based on current training packages, was in existence as “industry based training” well before the AQTF was established.

We have a constant struggle to source, train and retain experienced industry personnel who wish to act as Trainers and Assessors. On the following pages we have detailed some of the issues we believe need to be addressed to assist with this issue.

In addition to working with H₂O Pro Pty Ltd some of our staff are also involved with volunteer emergency services (Surf Life Saving and Volunteer Fire Brigades) and have seen similar problems of sourcing, training and retaining volunteer Trainers and Assessors in these industries. Whilst the training is now all in line with AQTF standards, finding suitable people who want to train and assess in addition to undertaking their life saving or fire fighting duties is becoming increasingly more difficult.

We trust that the attached points will assist with the review of the VET sector and may help to identify better ways to source, train and retain experienced Trainers and Assessors.

Yours faithfully,
Greg Goulet
General Manager

Change in Participation in Vet due to emphasis on formal training

Historically VET was aimed at employment based qualifications that fell between the general education of High School and Tertiary qualifications. VET was generally looked upon as an avenue to obtain a “qualification” (eg. Certificate II, III or IV) and it was generally “publicly funded” through TAFE institutions.

Now there is a lot of VET being offered as “short courses” (Unit(s) of competency) to meet specific training / qualification needs for industry and it is being delivered more and more in the Private sector. Common examples of this are First Aid courses and Fire Warden courses. In addition VET courses are also being used more and more by community organisations and volunteer workers.

On the positive side this means that training undertaken as short courses (or single units of competency) is more transportable and can be used towards qualifications. In addition training undertaken as a volunteer in the community is now often recognised towards a person’s employment and can be used towards qualifications.

On the negative side this is making it harder for many small specialist RTO’s and volunteer groups to find sufficiently qualified trainers and assessors to meet the demands of keeping this number of people qualified.

In addition these trainers and assessors are generally “industry” personnel who take on a training role as a supplement to their normal work. This means that we now have a change where a lot of training is being delivered by “part time” trainers and assessors rather than people who have made this a career choice.

Change in Volume and type of training delivered in VET as a result of RPL & RCC

With “Life Long” learning being accepted by employers, many industries require workers to demonstrate “current competency”. This now requires the VET system to provide “refresher” training for units of competency / short courses. This places further pressure on the system to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of qualified / experienced Trainers & Assessors (T/A).

In certain sectors of the VET industry this again highlights the move away from “career” T/A to people who Train and Assess as a “casual” or as part of another job role. These casual T/A tend to have a higher turnover and the need to find and train new people in these roles means that we lose a lot of experience and expertise which affects the ability of the industry to grow and improve.

In addition the assessment of RPL / RCC can be quite complex and whilst the concept is good, in the Private and volunteer sector, the costs of conducting this type of assessment is prohibitive as it usually involves “one on one” assessments.

Requirement for broader skills in VET professionals

What is a VET Professional? In the VET system we generally have two types of person. The first is the VET Professional who’s main job is that of Delivery and Assessment of training. The second is the Industry Specialist who also undertakes a mentoring role as a T/A. This also encompasses the volunteer who does T/A within their community organisation. These people do not regard themselves when asked about occupation as a “VET Professional”.

For the VET Professional the need for broader skills is accepted as this allows for a career path and job growth. For the Industry Specialist, the constant need to broaden VET skills is a barrier to start or remain as a T/A. These people want the basic skills to deliver the training and undertake the assessment to assist people in their industry. The need for continual upgrade of skills, which usually comes at a significant cost of money and time, is a major deterrent for people to undertake these roles. This then creates a problem where volunteer groups can’t source sufficient T/A within their ranks, and neither the organisation or the individual volunteer can afford to pay for a “professional” T/A.

Motivation for entering and remaining in the VET workforce

VET workforce generally requires industry specialists. In the Private sector this usually means that a person with industry experience also takes on a role as a T/A thus blurring the lines between a VET professional and an industry specialist.

In addition many community / volunteer organisations are now requiring their members to undertake VET training and thus require other “volunteers” to become “Trainers / Assessors”. These T/A generally don’t regard themselves as “professionals” as they see their role as a T/A as being a supplemental position to their other work in the organisation. This creates a distinction between those T/A who work in places such as a TAFE or RTO where their main role is course deliver / assessment and those who work casually or as volunteers.

This difference between the two roles (full time T/A versus casual) also impacts on the continuing development of these people. Those full time are more likely to continue to improve their skills and qualifications as they seek career advancement whilst the casual T/A simply wishes to continue in their industry job but also be able to deliver and assess.

This has a particular impact on entry level training courses where the T/A is constantly being required to upgrade their skills yet the material they are teaching / assessing is still only aimed at entry level participants.

In our organisation we employ up to 14 casual T/A. These are experienced industry professionals who’s life span as a T/A is usually only about 2 to 5 years. The main reasons they move out of the VET workforce is the constant need to upgrade their T/A qualifications in order to keep a part time job.

Possible Solutions

- Solutions need to be identified to enable more people to become T/A (particularly in volunteer organisations) whilst not compromising the standards. In general these organisations deliver specialist training which is not picked up elsewhere in the VET system, yet there are so many barriers to becoming a T/A, we often struggle to find enough people willing to do the work.

- One suggestion is to look at the requirement for T/A’s to hold a “Certificate IV TAA (or TAE)”. Could an interim qualification be used for people who are just delivering and assessing and not developing training courses? This would revert back to the old “Category 1 & 2 Train the Trainer course” but would allow a distinction between those who simply deliver and assess against an existing delivery and assessment strategy and those who develop the delivery and assessment strategies. (We believe that if a survey was conducted, most T/A would be in the category of delivering and assessing training which has been developed by their organisation rather than having to develop their own programs)

Whilst we don’t believe that the VET sector is aimed specifically at volunteer groups, it is a fact that much of the training is now being tailored to meet the AQF and therefore the VET system needs to recognise this and cater for these volunteers and niche training which now fall into this sector.