

Service Skills Australia Submission to
The Productivity Commission



November 2009
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Productivity Commission outcomes– A response

Introduction

Service Skills Australia is the Industry Skills Council for the service industries. Skills councils are the recognised national bodies providing advice on industry training and skills development needs to government and industry.

Service Skills Australia represents the interests of businesses across sectors including tourism, hospitality and events, sport, fitness and recreation, and retail, wholesale and personal services.

Service Skills Australia is an independent, not-for-profit body, managed by industry members and funded by the Australian Government to:

- develop a culture within the service industries which promotes and enhances the skills development of its workforce,
- develop policies, programs and services, including industry training packages, that support industry needs in relation to skills and workforce development,
- achieve quality skills outcomes throughout the service industries, and
- produce quality workforce development information and use industry intelligence to inform decision making.

Following is a response to the recommendations outlined in the report by the Productivity Commission:

Draft recommendation 9.2

State and territory government programs aimed at building the capacity of not-for-profits for service delivery or community development should include specific guidance and training on undertaking evaluations.

The contribution of volunteers to the nation's economy is significant and should be further explored in order to position the needs of unpaid labour in the vocational education and training (VET) and workforce development agendas.

As stated in the 2009 Sport, Fitness, Community and Outdoor Recreation Environmental Scan, currently, the vocational education and training system does not fully support the education and training needs of unpaid labour in the sport, recreation and fitness sector, be it for undertaking evaluation or any other training. In particular, greater use of skills recognition would benefit many volunteers.¹

This is also true of the Tourism and Hospitality and Wholesale, Retail and Personal Services industries. Service Skills Australia and its stakeholders therefore wholly support this recommendation.

¹ Service Skills Australia, Sport, Fitness, Community and Outdoor Recreation, Environmental Scan 2009, page 9.

Draft Recommendation 10.3

The Australian Government, through the Community Services and Health Industry Council, should undertake workforce planning for the community services sector having regard to the current and future workforce challenges arising from growing demand and increasing supply constraints.

Service Skills Australia works closely with industry to include unpaid labour in employment strategies. Whilst we support the call for workforce planning for the voluntary sector, we emphasize the importance of considering large number of volunteers working in the service industries (sports and recreation, tourism and hospitality, and wholesale, retail and personal services) and not merely restrict workforce planning to the community services sector.

The service industries are at the frontline of Australia's economy, providing consumer goods and personal and leisure services to both domestic and overseas consumers. In mid 2007 there were 344,655² businesses and the industry employs almost 2.5 million people (representing almost a quarter of Australia's workforce)³, with an additional 1.7 million volunteers engaged, mostly in the sport and recreation sector⁴.

According to a report from Volunteering Australia, sport and physical recreation organisations are more likely to be fully staffed by volunteers. 72% of all positions with such organisations are staffed by volunteers. Furthermore, median hours spent working for sport and recreation organisations were 48 hours per year – higher than all other types of organisation.⁵

Recommendation: The service industries are heavily dependent on unpaid labour in management, development and support roles; it is therefore imperative that all industry skills councils are consulted and included in any national workforce strategy.

Draft Recommendation 10.4

Australian governments should provide support to develop and promote training for not-for-profit management and boards in governance and related areas. They should explore the options for improving access to and quality of such training in these areas with peak bodies and appropriate training providers.

Service Skills Australia and its stakeholders support this recommendation. In addition, feedback from our recent volunteer workshop identified access to Governance / Finance / HR training as a common need across the voluntary sector for the service industries. The workshop also found that there is presently a low level of awareness of the existing training available to meet these needs.

² Based on ABS 8165.0 Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits, June 2007; please note that these figures are based on the information provided by the company to the ATO when they register for an ABN. Prior to 1st July 2007, businesses with turnover of at least AUD50,000 per annum (AUS100,000 in the case of non-profit organisations) were required to register for an ABN and remit GST. Businesses with turnover of under AUD50,000 were able to voluntarily register and these voluntarily-registered businesses are included in the counts.

³ ABS6291.0.55.003 Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, August 2008 table 629.0.55.003 E15_AUG06 – Employed persons by Sex, Industry (ANZSIC06), State, Status in Employment.

⁴ ABS 4441.0 Voluntary Work, Australia, 2006; table 18Volunteering, Organisation type.

⁵ Volunteering Australia www.volunteeringaustralia.org quoting ABS 4441.0 Voluntary Work, Australia 2006

In October 2009, SSA released a Workforce Development Strategy for the Sport and Recreation Industry. One of the key focus areas of the paper relates to providing equity of opportunity in VET for paid and non-paid (volunteer) workers. This centred primarily on the ease of access to Recognition for Prior Learning (RPL), implementation of RPL, and the recruitment, retention and motivation of volunteers. The paper recommends that paid employees are educated on the value of volunteers; flexible learning strategies are implemented (including e-learning and on-line delivery); career pathways are promoted across all types of employment – particularly for volunteers; and the promotion of the value of education, training and qualifying the workforce amongst trade and industry bodies, targeting individual organisations⁶.

Further to this, SSA is currently working on an issue paper that proposes a new way forward for RPL. We see this as a pathway for engaging with voluntary workers, making the RPL process simpler and more easily accessible for candidates.

Recommendations: We welcome the Productivity Commission to review our work on workforce development for volunteers in our Sport and Recreation Workforce Development Strategy, a copy of which can be downloaded via the following link: http://www.serviceskills.com.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1036

⁶ Service Skills Australia, Sport and Recreation Workforce Development Strategy, Scoping Report 2009, pages 20-22.