

Priority Area 1: A highly skilled workforce

Developing and enhancing the skills of the workforce is a critical component of this strategy. The strategy is underpinned by the assumption that a better match between the skills of employees and the skills required in the workplace make for a more productive industry. It also assumes that effective education and training is an essential component of a sustainable industry.

Focus Area 1: More responsive training system

It is essential that the education and training system meets the needs of employers and their staff. Whilst, training and education must be seen as only one element of a broader national “human capital” agenda,

poorly designed or delivered training fails to deliver the skills and knowledge required by individuals and their employers and does not maximize the significant investment of public and private funds.

It is evident that barriers exist for both workers and employers when addressing the accessibility of training. This can relate to the viability of the programs, as well as the availability within the appropriate work/ life balance. Training should be certified, have a flexible delivery format, and be conducive to employee’s work and life commitments.

Despite a network of high quality training providers that provide internationally recognised programs³, there is a lack of industry confidence in the current vocational educational and training (VET) system.⁴ Many of the key elements of an effective system are in place. This strategy aims to provide for better co-ordination, improved communication and industry leadership to create a truly customer driven system. Key principles underpinning this are:

- Suppliers (e.g. RTOs) must be accountable to the ‘consumers’ (businesses and employees in the industry).
- State agencies need to stop impeding the emergence of an industry led national system
Regulatory systems need to speak in harmony with the needs of industry rather than against them.
- Consolidated labour force data at a national, state and regional level is required to inform operators, service providers and policy makers.

The establishment of Skills Australia and an expanded role for Industry Skills Councils will assist this process. Other key components of focus area include:

Access to quality education and training

Industry would expect that the number of the additional 630,000 places will be made available to businesses in the tourism and hospitality industry given the size of the industry, its projected employment growth and the current qualifications profile of workers in the sector.

³ Typically at tertiary level.

⁴ A recent Tourism Skills Survey showed that only 30% of tourism employers believed graduates from VET courses have the skills to meet employer needs. More than three quarters of the respondents wanted more input into course content and believed the vocational education and training sector needed to provide more practical job skills. Major issues included;

- limited industry involvement in decision making and ineffective consultative arrangements
- glorification of traditional trades and lack of parity of esteem for the skills of service industries
- a supplier dominated training system with limited focus on workplace needs
- ineffective monitoring of RTOs
- limited confidence and understanding by employers and employees in the system

Industry leadership

The broader role envisaged for skills councils is also welcomed and these should become cross portfolio “skills and labour force” councils that advise government on key workforce and workplace issues. The revised *Tourism, Hospitality and Events Tourism Package* aligns competencies more closely with industry practices and provides the foundations for an effective qualification framework for the industry.

Ensuring quality demand driven service provision

Concerns remain with the level of oversight of registered training organisations by State Training Authorities. There should be a return to similar arrangements as were operating in the 1990’s when the industry training council played an active role in screening training providers.

Industry requires that they can ensure that assessment processes are rigorous enough to increase and maintain the integrity of industry VET qualifications.

Focus Area 2: Better recognition of existing knowledge and skills

Tourism and hospitality occupations are often not recognised as professions and the skills and occupations not appropriately valued. Greater effort is required to use Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to provide formal recognition and qualifications for people that have been working in the industry for many years without forcing them to undertake a full VET course. RPL processes that have the confidence of the industry must be identified and funded. The coordinated use of the new training places should help achieve this goal.

Focus Area 3: Accelerated pathways

There is a need for alternative models of apprenticeship training to promote accelerated learning and make trades such as cooks more attractive to mature workers and not disadvantage people who wish to stay in regional locations.⁵

Focus Area 4: Enhancing business and management skills

Greater effort is required to develop and maintain the capacity of managers in the industry to run operations effectively and to attract, develop and retain staff.

These skills will be highly variable in any industry dominated by owner/operator SME’s, such as tourism, hospitality and accommodation. There needs to be a targeted effort to ensure operators have the skills and knowledge to operate productive businesses, and provision to fill the gaps is accessible to industry. It should be noted that industry has significant concerns about the consistency and quality of training and assessment of its potential and existing employees.

⁵ For instance, the accelerated chefs apprenticeship established in Canberra provides an alternative to the time-based model and can encourage employers to invest in training