

## COMMUNITIES@WORK

ACT Skills Commission Secretariat  
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### **ACT Skills Commission Interim Report**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the ACT Skills Commission Interim Report.

As you will be aware, several of our staff put forward views and suggestions in recent consultation meetings with the Commission. In this feedback letter we provide comment on some of the recommendations contained in the report, with a focus on a few key points.

In the broad, we support the Commission's strategies and recommendations from the standpoint that they open up possibilities for positive action to address skills shortages in the ACT.

We suggest, in considering these possibilities, in addition to the institutional responses noted in the Interim Report, that the scope and scale of Registered Training Organisation (RTO) activity in the ACT be noted. Private/community sector RTO activity – involving flexible learning arrangements and significant reach into many workplaces – has the experience and potential to make a valuable contribution in this important policy area. In that regard, we urge the Commission to continue its consultations with the private/community RTOs and industry representatives and to continue its work in collecting and analyzing available information on the sector.

*With respect to the recommendations relating to Strategy 2, we suggest consideration of the following:*

2.7 – If a Skills Centre is established, we believe for preference that a school environment should be avoided. Rather the venue should be attractive and accessible to the public, including enabling after hours visits.

2.10 – regarding the design of a Careers Marketplace website, we note that there are several apparently similar websites already available, including [www.careers.com.au](http://www.careers.com.au), [www.career.edu.au/career](http://www.career.edu.au/career), [www.mycareer.com.au](http://www.mycareer.com.au) and

[www.nationcareerdevelopmentweek.com.au](http://www.nationcareerdevelopmentweek.com.au). Perhaps, rather than creating a new website consideration could be given to improving links for free between existing websites

2.12 – based on past experience, including a relevant ITAB initiative, we have concerns about the viability of a Group Training Scheme for the community sector. In the event this recommendation is pursued, the Scheme should run independently, be the subject of a competitive tender and be guided by a steering group from the sector.

2.14 - We note this recommendation focuses on ACT Government employees. The idea of a survey of older workers approaching retirement has general application and perhaps could be pursued in other contexts, if practicable.

*With respect to recommendations in relation to Strategy 3, we suggest consideration of the following:*

3.3 - Perhaps an additional aspect of this recommendation could be to encourage the ACT Government to consult with RTOs regarding the development of flexible training arrangements for the welfare to work recipients who have to work for 15 hours a week from 1 July 2007. Several RTOs have experience with developing and delivering training for people disadvantaged in the labour market.

3.4 – We strongly support the idea of a register of retired workers who are available for short or longer term assignments. We are aware of many community sector employers who recognize the value such workers could bring to their organisations but who find it difficult to make contact with them.

3.5, 3.6 The work of the ACT Children’s Services Forum, established by the ACT Government and in particular the work of ACT Treasury in determining the need for child care places in the ACT, is available to inform the implementation of these recommendations.

As well as focusing on centre-based child care, which relates to children from birth to school age, it is important to recognize the crucial role of before and after school care and of vacation care in enabling parents to participate in the paid workforce.

Significant numbers of university students work in before and after school care and in vacation care in the ACT. Many of these are studying to become school teachers and hence, their ‘school age care’ experience is valuable to them.

Closer consultation between the before/after school and vacation care sector and the tertiary education institutions would be helpful. It is our experience that many university students are lost to the school age care workforce because of

university study timetables. While recognizing the primacy of university requirements, perhaps liaison between the sectors could result in a practical outcome of benefit to all.

*With respect to recommendations relating to Strategy 4, we suggest consideration of the following:*

4.1, 4.2 We consider both of these recommendations to have considerable merit. We agree with the Commission that cost benefit analyses would need to be undertaken regarding any new programs to be undertaken.

We believe it would also be essential to have in place a thorough scoping of services already available through the Commonwealth and ACT Governments and the private and community sectors, to avoid a further layer of facilitation unless this is absolutely necessary. It may be possible, for example, to expand the responsibilities of an existing service to include 'home to work' transitions. Strategic Priorities Program funding could be relevant here, in which case we believe the funding should be in place for three years as opposed to the current yearly arrangements.

*With respect to recommendations relating to Strategy 5, we suggest consideration of the following:*

5.3 This recommendation appears to focus on young people only, whereas the lack of ICT knowledge is a significant barrier to older people re-entering or staying in the workforce. The Commission may care to consider the value of a major project to address the lack of ICT skills in mature age workers.

5.4 It is our understanding that the Victorian Skills Store and Queensland's Skill Centres models utilise the Competency Navigator. From our discussions with people 'on the ground' we are advised that this technique is of positive use when a trained skilled assessor is present to assist, otherwise it can be misleading.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the Skills Commission Interim Report. We are very happy to offer further comment or provide more information as required. Our contact person is Tracy Wiggins, Executive Manager, Inclusion Support and Training, telephone 6287 2322 and email: [tracy.wiggins@commsatwork.org](mailto:tracy.wiggins@commsatwork.org)

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30 January 2008