Greening the Education Industry Workforce

October 2009
The Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Precision Consultancy Skills for Sustainability paper: *Sustainability Skills Stocktake and Gap Analysis*.

ACPET is the peak, national industry association for independent providers of post-compulsory education and training. ACPET represents more than 1,100 organisations, from schools to higher education institutes, delivering a full range of education, training and English language courses to both domestic and international students.

The format of this submission follows the format set out in the Precision Consultancy discussion paper.

1. **What activities are you aware of in the area of the development and embedding of sustainability skills in VET training and how might information about these be brought together.**

ACPET is aware of the:
- National VET Sector Sustainability Policy and Action Plan
- The National Agreement on Skills and Workforce Development
- The National Partnership Agreement on energy Efficiency
- The National Strategy on Energy efficiency
- Skills go Green by 2010

All activities regarding skills for sustainability, both State and Commonwealth, should be brought under a central reporting body. A sub-committee of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) would be an appropriate body.

2. **Which of the six options do you think would add value and why?**

All of the six options present some merit. However as previously agreed to by the different industry skills councils, and supported by ACPET, there cannot be a blanket or fixed process that treats each industry in a similar fashion. Accordingly, it must be noted that the effectiveness of the options presented will vary across different occupations.

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<th>Option 1</th>
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<td>Identifying gaps in training packages and filling them with new units of competency and/or qualifications is supported by ACPET and should now be an automatic process as part of any</td>
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training package update. In much the same way as health and safety requirements are built into training packages so should sustainability skills.

**Option 2**

The option noted in the discussion paper to modify existing units of competency to ensure that the gaps are covered should be an automatic process. As noted in the options paper, the continuous improvement process for units of competency should identify skills for sustainability requirements. The challenge that must be meet is ensuring that those who have the responsibility for managing continuous improvement ensure that sustainability skills are incorporated.

Part of this option must involve acknowledging accredited courses that have been developed and are already delivering skills for sustainability. An industry scan should be conducted in order to ascertain and identify what accredited courses are already part of the process.

**Option 3**

Acquiring skills for sustainability should be part of required competencies. Currently there is a considerable skills gap in this areas and a cultural change by RTOs will be necessary to overcome the skills gap. Possessing such skills should be considered as required practice for trainers and assessors.

In the case of the stated examples of the operator of a grader or haul truck driver, the student should be taught how to operate the machinery with fuel efficiency in mind from both an environmental perspective and from a good business practice perspective.

**Option 4**

This option would produce benefits in relation to skills for sustainability. However it is important that RTOs do not lose focus on producing and delivering graduates that are competent in all requirements of the qualification. Further, skills for sustainability must be imbedded in the learning process and not seen as a ‘bolt on’ or additional skill.

**Option 5**

By trying to define what occupations “make a difference” an extra layer of work is added to the process, which is time consuming and requires resources. These resources should be directed to develop a systematic approach to upgrading all training packages.
There is an economic cost as well as an environmental cost to wasting water and not using energy efficient processes, all training package should developed taking note of this consideration. It should be realised that economic costs are far more tangible than environmental costs and as such will provide good leverage for business and industry to adjust their practices. Good practice from an economic sense will deliver good practice in an environmental sense.

Option 6

Developing a designated website will be beneficial if it contains easy to access information, is well mapped and free of useless jargon. Appropriate resources will need to be allocated to marketing the website.

3. Should trainers and assessors in targeted industries and occupations participate in professional development relevant to skills for sustainability? Should these be mandatory to maintain current competency?

If the government is fully committed to developing skills for sustainability then mandatory professional development should be part of the requirements for maintaining current competency. ACPET has a successful track record in delivering professional development for the industry and is well positioned to deliver PD for skills for sustainability for trainers and assessors. Strong PD would ensure that skills for sustainability would then be given equal weighting to other industry practice skills that trainers and assessors are expected to maintain.

4. What can be done to encourage ISCs and industry stakeholders to offer low-cost professional development for targeted groups of trainers and assessors who are delivering training and assessing in skills for sustainability programs?

As a key industry stakeholder, funding should be provided to ACPET to deliver a dedicated professional development program for trainers and assessors. ACPET would deliver professional development with clear out-puts and be able to provide clear and succinct advice to Government on changing trends and cultural shifts regarding skills for sustainability. ACPET is uniquely placed to act as a conduit between Government and trainers and assessors (and to a greater extend Government and RTOs).

Incentives that are targeted across the entire VET industry would help deliver cultural change amongst RTOs, industry and business and would form a vital plank to assist Government achieve its target. It is vitally important for Government to acknowledge and realise that there is a skill shortage amongst trainers and assessors who can deliver skills for sustainability. Strong and committed action must be taken by Government to address this
skills shortage. This means providing resources to RTO’s to encourage and support delivery of skills for sustainability.

5. What measures can be taken to reduce the duplication of government funded courses and units of competency relevant to sustainability. What can be done to share information amongst the appropriate agencies on the status of courses relevant to skills for sustainability?

A centrally managed approach that identifies an accountable body who is responsible for the delivery of programs that meet the unique needs at the ‘coal face’ and ensures avoidance of duplication between different agencies within Government and different levels of Government. A sub-committee of COAG should take carriage of this responsibility.

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, has announced that all vocational education training packages will be reviewed to ensure that they include relevant green skills by March next year, and that all courses will be revised to include the new green skills by the end of 2010. Given such commitment has been made by the Commonwealth it is entirely appropriate that process is managed centrally in order for the Government’s objectives to be achieved.

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