

13 October 2005

Department of Education & Training  
C/- Ms T Whittingham  
via email - VET.Inquiry@edumail.vic.gov.au

## **RE: INQUIRY INTO VET IN VICTORIA**

Dear Ms Whittingham

Thank you for providing the wider community the opportunity to comment upon this inquiry into Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Victoria. Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in sending this submission.

The CMPA is an Association representing a broad spectrum of those involved in construction material processing businesses engaged in the extracting processing or otherwise working in hard rock, gravel, sand, masonry, clay, lime, soil, gypsum or recycling. The majority of our members are based either in regional Victoria or the outer metropolitan suburbs and are privately owned, family operated businesses. As an Association, we have established strong links between the businesses, suppliers and their regulator.

Many of our members are reporting a skills shortage along with a fear to employ due to the ever increasing obligations being placed upon them. The Association continues to work with them in making the education system easier to access by providing information, facilitating training at a Certificate II level and above, and developing the training resources for units of competency within the industry's Training Package.

Following are the CMPA's responses to several of the questions posed in the discussion papers which the Association feels able to address:

### **Term of Reference 1, q10**

*Are Commonwealth employer incentives distorting the training decisions of employees and therefore leading to the provision of training that should not be a priority? Should Victoria advocate changes to these incentives?*

The CMPA feels that there is no doubt that the Commonwealth employer incentives are distorting some training decisions in that training is often being conducted without any clear, long term direction. Businesses are often lead into training due to the financial incentives rather than the possibility of productivity and safety gains as a result of the individual development of employees through vocational training and assessment.

Further complicating this distortion in the extractive industries is that the available underpinning knowledge is very scarce and when present of little relevance or no longer current, and secondly that there are a lack of trainers with a sound understanding of the industry in which they train.

### **Term of Reference 3, q 11**

*How can access for mature age learners in rural and remote areas be improved?*

Over the past four years, the CMPA has striven to ensure that mature age learners in rural and remote areas are able to access training. The Association has done this with the assistance of Workplace English Language and Literacy funding and has seen three units of Certificate II provided in locations such as Horsham, Bendigo, Benalla, Traralgon, Ballarat, Campbellfield, Laverton, Langwarrin, Middle Tarwin, Noojee, and Bairnsdale. We now have a proven track record with over 678 persons having commenced these three units of competency over the last four years and in 2004, a 99% completion rate was achieved.

It is obvious that the participation of an Association and the regulator in fostering training is working as far as the CMPA's example is concerned; however please recognise that this is not sustainable without additional support. The Association sees an Industry Liaison Agent (ILA) as an eventual step required to continue assisting industry.

We see that the state would be able to ensure that similar success rates are achieved across the board by improving the funding available to training being driven by the industry rather than the RTO, and the provision of more ILAs both within industry Associations and externally facilitated to educate industry owners and managers of the benefits and how to support training within their organisation and employees of their opportunities.

### **Term of Reference 4, q 7**

*Is the level of government funding for VET adequate? If not, what level of government funding is required?*

Funding for VET is not adequate and should, in our view:

- Provide greater emphasis on partnerships being formed between industry, its suppliers and regulators;
- Be increased in courses targeted for regional or remote areas, or smaller family based businesses;
- Be more readily available to private RTOs supported by industry particularly in areas where such services are not presently provided by public providers; and
- Be able to reduce the direct monetary costs upon industry to as low as reasonably practicable.

### **Term of Reference 4, q11**

*Should industry be encouraged to make a greater contribution to VET tuition costs?*

With the ever increasing fluidity of the workforce, our industry should not be required to make a greater contribution to VET tuition costs. It is difficult for a small to medium enterprise to afford to train a person, however many instances our members find themselves repetitively doing this as their newly trained employees are moving into different sectors. In other words, as our members are up skilling their workforce, other states or sectors are offering them financial packages which cannot be matched by our industry.

It would be preferable if industry's contribution was by being directly involved in developing and reviewing training resources to ensure best practice. In this sense, it would be important to include the supplier and the regulator of industry to see that only the most progressive, current and legislatively correct information is developed for trainers to use. In turn trainees will recognise the significance and relevance of the resources being passed on, and actively support the ongoing process within the workforce.

In summary, the Association's experience over the last five years has clearly identified a lack of understanding and awareness of certified training by owners and managers. This has been exasperated by the minimal contact with formal training that industry employees have been offered in the past.

I hope that these comments are of assistance to the inquiry and would be more than happy to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely



pp Ron Kerr  
Honorary CEO