



Australian  
Industry and  
Skills Committee

# Communique - Industry Reference Committee Chairs Conference 26 August 2016

The Chair of the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC), Mr John Pollaers, convened the third Industry Reference Committee (IRC) Chairs Conference in Melbourne on Friday, 26 August.

The conference brought together over 100 representatives, including IRC Chairs, representatives of their allocated Skills Service Organisations (SSO) together with the AISC, to discuss significant shared progress to date in establishing the new arrangements for training package development, executing change and building on the strengths of Australia's training system.

The conference focussed on the AISC's priorities for the coming year, including:

- driving industry-responsive training package development through the development of robust four-year industry work plans
- working through the important reviews of IRC structure and membership.

The conference also provided IRC Chairs with an important opportunity to contribute industry perspectives to early-stage VET system policy development. The AISC intends to facilitate more of these opportunities in future to ensure that the VET system is focused on meeting the needs of Australian industries.

The conference was addressed from Brisbane by the Australian Government Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills, the Hon Karen Andrews MP, who confirmed the importance of both moving quickly to bed down the new industry-led arrangements,

including the IRC reviews, and ensuring decisions are based on strong evidence of industry need.

Mr Pollaers discussed that the AISC was focused on establishing a training package development system that both considers national priorities and is tailored to the needs of individual industries and driven from the ground up, rather than a one-size-fits all approach. This includes ensuring that:

- processes are streamlined, lessons are learned and incorporated into future processes, and looking to implement an efficient system:
  - Business cases for training package development should be proportionate in size to the scope of the change being proposed and the level of industry support. Where the case for change is clear and there is demonstrated wide-spread industry support for the direction being proposed – the business case could be as small as 2 pages. The focus should be on what is necessary to demonstrate a compelling case for change.
  - The pilot of IRC reviews is already informing the way other IRCs are approaching their review. IRCs were encouraged to consider ahead of time the structure that would work best for them using the structures coming out of the pilot – and available on the AISC website – as a guide.
- IRC work plans offer strategic insights into emerging skills needs across industry sectors, that identify a strong case for change, provide strong links between proposed changes and industry need, and consider the opportunities presented by training package reform directions announced by Ministers in November 2015.
- stakeholder networks and communication channels are improved to bolster 2-way communication with industry stakeholders on AISC work.
- IRCs and SSOs are working together to determine the ideal levels of support IRCs need to make sure members can focus their efforts on decision making.
- Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) have a formal place in the system and are convened flexibly and as needed.
- timeframes for commissioned work are derived from an industry's identified need.
- IRCs are created and evolve according to changing industry needs and priorities – while there will be IRCs that close and others that are established, there is no intention by the AISC to either increase or decrease the overall number of IRCs.

The meeting specifically explored issues arising with the development of the 4-year work plans. Mr Pollaers made clear that:

- while the AISC will draw insights from across work plans to develop a national picture across industry sectors – there was no intention to summarise the work

plans themselves. The committee will consider each IRC's work plan directly when considering the future work priorities.

- while occupation and employment data had been provided by the department to support the process, where this data does not adequately describe the IRCs industry sector, the AISC would welcome advice as part of the work plan about why that is the case and it is also open to IRCs to supplement this information and describe how better approaches could be taken.

Mr Pollaers also spoke about the open communications channels available to IRCs with their SSO and contacts in the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, to raise any issues or concerns as they arise.

IRC Chairs took the opportunity to inform key policy initiatives impacting the training sector including the implementation of the Australian Government's Youth Jobs PaTH programme and the Future Training Product Reform project - being led by the Victorian Government on behalf of the Ministerial Council.

Chairs were also provided with two presentations:

- Mr Michael de Souza from the Australian 3D Manufacturing Association presented some thought provoking demonstrations of how technology is impacting on the world of work.
- KPMG gave a short presentation about the range of support services that will be made available to IRCs, including professional development in committee governance and management.

### **Next steps**

Four year industry work plans are due to be submitted to the AISC by the end of September 2016. The AISC will develop the next iteration of the National Schedule of training package development work, based on the IRC work plans. As noted in the IRC Operating Framework, in developing the National Schedule, the AISC will assess relative priorities across IRC work plans, taking account of risk, regulatory need, strategic industry and government priorities, economic impact, current levels of VET activity, and available budget.

The IRC reviews will be accelerated to ensure all are completed as soon as possible. Industry stakeholders will be notified as new proposals for consultation are scheduled for publication.

The AISC will communicate with IRC Chairs early next year to arrange the next face-to-face meeting.