

## RESPONSE 7

Skilling Australia for the Future, Discussion Paper 2008

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The Manager

I am writing to request a review of the courses available in the Productivity Places Program for retraining people to re enter the workforce.

The DOME Association (Don't Overlook Mature Expertise) is a not for profit/volunteer organisation that has been in existence for 26 years with the sole aim of assisting mature aged unemployed back into the workforce.

Operating mainly in Adelaide and some South Australia Regional Areas we presently have about 2,000 people registered with our organisation of varying degrees of skills and abilities who need assistance to improve or develop new skills to gain employment.

A large majority of the people we are trying to assist, have very little or no computer or business skills. Which in today's industry has become almost a basic requirement and right at this point in time there is no funding available to assist unemployed people gain these skills. The Skilling Australia discussion paper reports that "more than 70% of male long-term unemployed have no post school qualifications, which is also true of 80% of females receiving Parenting Payments who are not in the labour force." This is particularly true of the mature age cohort who did not grow up with computers at school.

One of the main issues facing mature aged unemployed is a loss of confidence & self esteem when they suddenly find themselves unemployed and out of an environment they have spent a large portion of their life. Compounding this situation is the knowledge that this lack of basic skill severely inhibits their ability to regain employment.

The new Federal Government training assistance program the Productivity Places Program does not include any low level business or computer training courses. Whilst we may not represent a specific industry, we do represent a disadvantaged segment of the potential workforce. So the only option is for these unemployed people to scrape together what little funds they have to pay for a training course to achieve these required skills.

Sure, they may be able to access funds through the Job Network program, but that may only be available after they have been out of work for a soul destroying 3 – 6 months. Census statistics and surveys have shown by this time Mature Aged unemployed have given up on finding employment ever again and resign themselves to living off the unemployment benefits.

Pardon my passion, but despite the improving job market, I see this situation on a daily basis and it seems to me to be counterproductive to our efforts to address the skills shortage by ignoring our largest labour pool. Statistically we are suffering the skills shortage because of the aging population. More people are leaving the workforce than are entering it and without this training assistance we are only encouraging that exodus.

I ask that you consider and review any opportunities to improve the lot of the mature age unemployed by including Certificate II in Business Studies and a basic Computer course such as Bytes in the eligible training courses for the Productivity Places Program.

Regards

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