

MINTRAC

NATIONAL MEAT INDUSTRY TRAINING ADVISORY COUNCIL LIMITED

RESPONSE 8

MINTRAC

Response to Skilling Australia discussion paper



Skilling Australia for the Future

Discussion Paper 2008 – Meat Industry Response

Section 1 – about MINTRAC

MINTRAC is the National Meat Industry Training Advisory Council. In operation since 1993, MINTRAC is funded by the meat industry to provide services to the industry in the areas of education and training development and advocacy.



When the Agri-Food Industry Skills Council (AFISC) was formed in 2004, MINTRAC was represented during the formation process, and there are currently two meat industry AFISC Board members, who are also members of the MINTRAC Board. MINTRAC continues to represent meat industry interests within the AFISC structure, especially in areas such as review and improvement of the *Australian Meat Industry Training Package*; provision of advice, support services and professional development to meat industry enterprises and Registered Training Organisations; and advocacy with governments, peak bodies and regulators in matters related to meat industry education and training.



MINTRAC has been clearly identified by the meat industry as its preferred provider of these services, and it seeks to continue this role within the expanded roles of the Industry Skills Councils.

The discussion questions in the *Skilling Australia for the Future* discussion paper have been addressed from the perspective of the Australian meat industry.

Section 2: Skills Australia

How should Skills Australia interact with industry groups to ensure that it has access to the most appropriate and up to date data?

MINTRAC is the nominated body to represent the meat industry in matters related to education and training. In this role it regularly surveys and compiles data in relation to the skills and training needs of the industry. MINTRAC recognises that the Federal Government's nominated prime source for such information is the Industry Skills Councils, and MINTRAC willingly and regularly provides data to AFISC.

MINTRAC recognises however, that such data, once it is received by AFISC is often combined with data from other sectors and the individual requirements of the meat industry can be overshadowed or reduced in priority when collated with data from other sources.

For that reason, it is submitted that Skills Australia should seek and accept input from a variety of sources, including key peak bodies.

What sources of data on skills stages should Skills Australia access?

The meat industry rarely relies on public advertising, such as in national newspapers or on the internet for recruitment of staff, as such practices do not usually bring good results. More often the industry will use employment agencies, word-of-mouth, community and local newspapers, and billboard advertising in local communities. Therefore, skills shortages data gathered on the basis of newspaper advertising often do not fairly represent the requirements of the meat industry.

The meat industry does, however, have very strong formal management networks with formal channels of communication. For this reason the industry is able to rapidly compile accurate, up-to-date data on employment vacancies through these networks. For example, in 2006, MINTRAC combined with the Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) to gather statistics on butchery and apprenticeship vacancies in the industry, and in the space of a week was able to provide accurate statistics from data directly provided by individual businesses.

Section 3: Strengthened Industry Skills Councils

How will ISCs ensure their environmental scans take full account of workforce issues in their areas of industry coverage?

The meat industry is of the view that it already has structures in place to be able to provide accurate information on workforce issues affecting the industry, through MINTRAC. MINTRAC will work closely with AFISC to ensure that such data is made available and the industry's issues are accurately represented.

This relationship will only be effective however, if MINTRAC is engaged early in the data collection process. During the recent preparation of an environmental scan, AFISC undertook its own research, and did not invite input from the meat industry until two days before the scan was due to be submitted to DEST. The draft scan prepared by AFISC was considered inappropriate by the industry, and had to be totally re-written in a very sort space of time.

What is the best way to ensure that state based industry advisory bodies are engaged with the model without duplication of roles?

State-based industry advisory bodies (such as ITABs) can be useful sources of industry intelligence. Frequently their boards and networks comprise a broad representation from their areas of industry coverage. They can therefore provide the means of rapid contact with broad groups and the capacity to gather information and industry responses very quickly. The Executives of these organisations also provide the means of being able to sort and prioritise requests for input, so that employers are not overwhelmed with irrelevant requests.

These bodies are also in a good position to gather and disseminate information relating to their own State Training Authorities – once again they can sort the information that is directly relevant to particular industry groups and ensure it reaches the appropriate people.

The relationship is currently working reasonably well for the meat industry. Nearly all of the State ITABs participate in the MINTRAC industry networks, and liaise directly with MINTRAC when collecting and collating meat industry information. Sometimes this communication process fails, such as when there is a major restructuring at State level, but MINTRAC works closely with these organisations to ensure open and ongoing communication.

How can ISCs encourage and highlight responsive Registered Training Organisations delivering high quality training for their industry?

This is a role which has been undertaken by MINTRAC for the meat industry for several years, and which it seeks to continue within the ISC structure.

MINTRAC has regular contact with all RTOs registered under the Australian Meat Industry Training Package, and involves these RTOs in network meetings, conferences, regular communications and professional development programs. Meat Industry RTOs readily share their auditing experiences and outcomes at these meetings so that concerns and issues are addressed consistently and collectively.

MINTRAC also provides technical advice to STAs, on request, to assist in the registration and auditing of RTOs.

Because most meat industry training is conducted on-the-job, employers have a close relationship with their RTOs (often the RTO trainer is stationed on-site), and any concerns with the training provided are addressed rapidly and directly.

Many enterprises are Registered Training Organisations in their own right. Those that are not are usually in an informed position to develop an RTO partnership arrangement which best meets their needs. Most meat industry companies are quite well-versed in the VET system and have a clear understanding of what they require from their RTOs in order to ensure that their training system meets their company needs. Where in doubt, they will seek advice and assistance from MINTRAC.

Section 4: Productivity Places

Phase 1: Job Seeker places from 1 April 2008

What can be done to ensure that the training outcomes for individuals and enterprises translate into appropriate employment outcomes?

During the preparation of the environmental scan for AFISC in March 2008, the meat industry identified a substantial number of vacancies, particularly for butchers, boners, slicers and slaughterpersons.

This was followed up in April 2008 with a letter from the Australian Meat Industry Council to AFISC, seeking access to the pool of 526,000 people identified by the government, and indicating that the industry was in a

position to guarantee employment outcomes for people trained for these positions.

In this letter, the CEO of AMIC also indicated that the industry was committed to ensuring an improvement in current completion rates, and recommended the appointment of a dedicated liaison officer to work with apprentices and employers to resolve issues encountered during training. AMIC set a nominal target of seeking to improve retention rates by 10%.

The implementation of such a project in the meat industry could be closely monitored and managed by MINTRAC, which has the personnel and experience to ensure prescribed targets are addressed.

***Phase 2: Existing workers and job-seeker places 1
July 2008 to 31 December 2008***

How can this program be managed to best meet the needs of employers?

Once again the meat industry is in a position to guarantee employment places for both categories of workers, as outlined in the previous section.
