

Collaborative Venture on VET

In October 2013, BIAA and BIAs from NSW, SA and VIC met with representatives from the Industry Skills Council, ITAB and NSW Industry stakeholders at a VET Forum to discuss the future of the VET System; the concerns of the industry and the challenges it faces.

In coming together to consider the problem, the BIA's have agreed to mobilise collaboratively to pursue the following objectives:

- ***Establish a mechanism to attract and engage marine mechanical and shipwright/boatbuilder apprentices, and support their completion.***
- ***Work to ensure the provision of sustainable, accessible, high quality training delivery services for marine trades.***

These simple objectives will be pursued in a hugely complex environment, described as follows by one Expert Panel appointed by the former Federal Government to review the situation:

“The Australian Apprenticeships system as part of the broader VET system has numerous stakeholders and participants engaged with the system including: the Australian Government, state and territory governments, RTO's, ACC's, employers, apprentices and trainees, industry organisations and Industry Skills Councils, unions, GTO's, and regulatory or licensing authorities”.

With so many players and a vast web of policy, funding, and regulatory red-tape to understand and negotiate, this is not going to be a simple job.

In order to make sense of this complex system – particularly who does what in the big scheme of things - we've chunked the apprenticeship life-cycle in the VET context into three “pillars”, and identified the tasks/roles/actions within each pillar.

GATEWAY:

- Create an interest in boating careers
- Facilitate contact between new entrants and employers (apprenticeships)
- Support the establishment of apprenticeships

EVERYTHING ELSE:

- The current role of ITABS – provide advice to Govt as to future skills and training demand, as well as monitor training outcomes
- The current role of Industry Skills Councils - maintain qualifications / competencies (i.e.: content)
- The current role of Apprenticeship Centers – facilitate the sign up of apprentices, navigate funding programs / entitlements, oversee relationship between apprentice and employer
- Mentoring, motivational / development programs
- Industry Vision / Strategy which incorporates VET and skills demand forecasts

DELIVERY:

- Enrolling students
- Classroom teaching
- Provide suitable venue, plant, equipment
- Assessment
- Certification
- Workplace teaching
- RTO / Compliance
- Insurances
- Administer above
- Industry partnerships/ supply agreements

With the exception perhaps of Mentoring, these tasks and roles have all been done in a more-or-less structured way by a principal stakeholder or body. In pursuit of our stated objectives, our Collaborative Venture on VET will explore and develop on the following proposed actions/deliverables, as relates to the above diagram:

GATEWAY: BIA would enhance and expand existing information resources/events to attract potential apprentices, and establish a mechanism to identify and match these apprentices with potential employers.

EVERYTHING ELSE: BIA would establish capacity to mentor/support apprentices and employers to ensure improved outcomes (training and completion). Also, we would develop strategic relationships with Apprenticeship Centres, and work with them in relation to funding and entitlement programs, and employer/apprentice relationships.

We'll expand our engagement with Industry Skills Councils to ensure that qualifications and competencies are relevant to industry demand.

Our participation in the above would improve our capacity to develop/deliver strategic advice to government and other stakeholders – particularly as relates to future training/skills demand – and where extant we'll partner with ITAB's to monitor training outcomes.

A Vision/Strategy Document will be developed and maintained to inform our strategic outlook, and underpin advocacy and forward planning.

DELIVERY: Training and Assessment service delivery would remain the domain of RTO's, but BIA would seek to establish centres of excellence, and we'll liaise with these Centres and other RTO's to facilitate improved distance learning and workplace assessment options.

At the first VET Forum held in Sydney in October the scope and scale of the issue was laid bare, and the bones of the BIAA Collaborative Venture on VET set out.

Attendee's from QLD, VIC, and SA joined a sizeable group of NSW industry stakeholders to discuss the way forward, and whilst the message was by no means welcome to the mainly employer-audience, it became apparent to those in the room that their situation (and dissatisfaction with the system) is not isolated. The VET problem is affecting everyone – some critically – and the impact on individual business is as a direct result of whole-of-system issues.

Under the auspices of the BIAA the decision has since been taken to move forward on a national basis in fleshing out this Collaborative Venture game-plan for a better VET future. It won't be a simple job, but it's unanimously agreed that the prospect of our skills development/training options evaporating is unacceptable.

The return to prosperous times for the boating industry will accelerate, and industry will dial up demand for skilled and enthusiastic people. Our product and service offerings will continue to specialise, diversify, and become more technologically advanced. The aging of the population will further shrink the potential pool of quality entrants to our industry, and the competition for the right people to come on board will intensify.

To ensure the return to those prosperous times, we must secure our skills pipeline. If we attract the right young people to a boating career with prospects, and support a rich and exciting learning/apprenticeship experience, we'll have laid strong foundations for the future... averting a crisis into the bargain.