

Correspondence Ref. BeNext003

18th of November 2009

Mr Phillip Bullock

Chair, Skills Australia

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Dear Mr Bullock,

Response to *Workforce Futures*

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to Skills Australia's discussion paper *Workforce Futures*. BeNext makes several points in response to the discussion paper.

Identifying occupations for national planning

One of the short falls evidenced in current workforce planning approaches is based on forecasting models that incorporate historical trends modelled on demographic data, industry development and skills demand. Where this comes undone is in local environments where global market forces place extraordinary demands on regional skills supply.

This is observed acutely in regional communities that experience unprecedented economical growth that arises from resource and energy sector project expansion. The local business response to limited local supply is to increase financial workforce attraction incentives and to implement transient workforce supply chain models.

In isolated workforce/ skill's "ecosystems" the interrelations of an expanding projects workforce demands impacts negatively on other sectors such as health, local government, retail and community services workforce supply. Failure to address workforce accessibility and equity generates a high community cost.

BeNext proposes that the high risk occupations framework encompass geographical and local ecosystem needs

Improving Participation

Engagement of an ageing workforce population needs to a significant pillar of government policy response. The Productivity Commission forecasting of a potential 4% points improvement in workforce participation if Australia met highest performing OECD is a notable statement that requires further analysis.

Missing from the Productivity Commission observation was a forward perspective of retirement intentions of older Australians. 3.3 million baby boomers are currently employed and over 1.1 million see themselves working beyond traditional retirement years (ABS, 2007).

This is the salient point, initiatives to maximise the workforce future of this country must encompass the whole of life spectrum of workforce contribution. To date there has been little initiative to address the needs of an ageing workforce and the discussion papers to date have provided cursory analysis of this situation.

BeNext proposes that the workforce future policy needs to explicitly promote and remove participation barriers for people at any age beyond 65years.

BeNext is encouraged by the direction the Australian Government is taking to improve the workforce future of this country and looks forward to the results of this consultative process.

Kind regards,

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References

ABS 6238.0 - Retirement and Retirement Intentions, Australia, Jul 2006 to Jun 2007