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## ***Workforce Futures:***

### ***Towards an Australian Workforce Development Strategy***

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Skills Australia would like to hear your views on *Workforce Futures* and welcomes your written submission by **6 November 2009**.

To assist with the analysis of submissions received, we request that feedback is provided using this template. Your co-operation is appreciated.

Submissions received may be published by Skills Australia or quoted. Please indicate in the space provided below if you would like your submission to remain confidential.

Please email submissions to [secretariat@skillsaustralia.gov.au](mailto:secretariat@skillsaustralia.gov.au)

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#### **Submission information**

Organisation	Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research
Contact	Guyonne Kalb
Phone	03 8344 2095
Email	<a href="mailto:g.kalb@unimelb.edu.au">g.kalb@unimelb.edu.au</a>

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## **Workforce Futures:**

### **Background Paper One**

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#### **What does the future hold? Meeting Australia's skill needs**

The *Workforce Futures Overview* paper raised a number of questions relating to Skills Australia's proposed approach to developing an Australian Workforce Development Strategy. In this section, we seek your feedback on questions relevant to meeting Australia's skill needs. *Background Paper One* at [www.skillsaustralia.gov.au/Publications\\_and\\_Resources](http://www.skillsaustralia.gov.au/Publications_and_Resources) highlights a number of issues for discussion which are relevant to your response.

Please provide feedback to these questions in the boxes below. A space has been provided at the end of the section to provide feedback on other issues you wish to raise.

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#### **Future skill needs and projections**

Q1. Are Skills Australia's interpretations of our future skill needs reasonable? Is there other evidence or analyses that should be considered?

*Please respond here*

#### **A risk-based approach**

Q2. What is your response to our proposal that governments should adopt a risk-based approach to skills planning? What do you see as the respective roles of industry, governments, education and training organisations and individuals in planning?

*Please respond here*

#### **Investment to support workforce demands**

Q3. How can we best use current investments to support our emerging workforce demands? What types of interventions may this require from governments, education and training organisations, industry and others?

*Please respond here*

### **Proposed actions**

- Q4. Do you have any comments about any of the specific actions suggested in Section 4.3 of Background Paper One?

*Please respond here*

### **Impact and ways to improve Skills Australia's proposed approach**

- Q5. How might our suggestions impact on your organisation/industry? Can you see advantages or disadvantages to our proposals? What could we do about it? What else should we be considering to make our future planning even better?

*Please respond here*

### **Other comments**

- Q6. Do you have any other comments in relation to meeting Australia's skill needs or issues raised in *Background Paper One*?

*I would like to add a few thoughts in response to the discussion on the four proposed criteria we had at the Victorian meeting in October.*

*- The balancing and weighting of criteria will be important and difficult. I agree occupations with long lead times require more planning and should receive attention. However, it is easy to overshoot (similar to oversupply of agricultural products when the price is high, due to a previous season's undersupply, which causes the price to go down and the supply to go down, potentially resulting in a vicious circle of over- and undersupply) so consideration should also be given to the consequences of having too much supply, and what could be done to deal with that eventuality. An example was dentists in the Netherlands who were in oversupply in the late 1980s due to previous shortages (which led to higher quotas of dentist places at university), resulting in several Dutch dentists migrating to other European countries.*

*The issue of overall work force participation is important as well, since it increases the total pool of potential workers instead of focussing on particular occupations. In case of many competing skill shortages increasing this total pool of workers can be crucial. An example is that although there is a shortage of nurses, there is a substantial pool of qualified nurses who are currently out of the labour force (in addition to those working in other occupations). Finding ways of attracting these nurses back in the labour force or retaining them in the first place could be a cost-efficient way of increasing the number of nurses working. More generally, making work more attractive to those currently not working could provide access to a substantial number of additional workers at low cost. Compared to many other countries, female labour force participation is quite low. Can we learn from countries such as Norway or Sweden to develop policies to make work*

*attractive to a larger group of women.*

*Another group that is relevant when considering ways in which to increase the available labour force are those with very low skill levels. In the 20-minute presentation lifting of core skills was mentioned briefly. For those whose skills are below the level required for most occupations (e.g. a lack of basic literacy or numeracy skills), a modest increase in skills to a minimum level would potentially make a large difference (between not being employable to becoming employable). Lifting these skills would also benefit the social inclusion agenda, since without basic literacy or numeracy skills people cannot function in today's society.*



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## **Workforce Futures:**

### **Background Paper Two**

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#### **Powering the workplace Realising Australia's skill potential**

The *Workforce Futures Overview* paper raised a number of questions relating to Skills Australia's proposed approach to developing an Australian Workforce Development Strategy. In this section, we seek your feedback on questions relevant to realising Australia's skill potential by powering the workplace. *Background Paper Two* at [www.skillsaustralia.gov.au/Publications\\_and\\_Resources](http://www.skillsaustralia.gov.au/Publications_and_Resources) highlights a number of issues for discussion which are relevant to your response.

Please provide feedback to these questions in the boxes below. A space has been provided at the end of the section to provide feedback on other issues you wish to raise.

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#### ***Time for the next step in progressing Australian workforce development?***

- Q7. Is it timely to adopt an innovative approach to skills that includes a focus on how skills are used and is linked to the way work is organised? How relevant do you find the definition of workforce development offered by Skills Australia (see Paper Two, Section 1.1)? How could it be improved?

*Please respond here*

#### ***Encouraging workforce participation and improving productivity***

- Q8. How can we link education and community-based strategies to build the level of workforce participation in Australia? How can we ensure our workplaces make effective use of people's skills and knowledge? What do you think are the pluses and minuses of localised, regional or industry-based approaches?

*In my view, an important issue is the underutilisation of parts of the potential workforce, such as women or persons with a disability. Amongst these groups labour force participation is already relatively low, but amongst those working there is also a higher proportion who are not fully utilising their skills. This is likely to be at least in part due to a lack of flexibility in work arrangements (e.g. allowing part-time hours, different working times, or additional weeks of unpaid leave for family work balance even for those in managerial roles) and/or support in the workplace (e.g. access to childcare). This could help keep people at work (rather than leaving temporarily because combining family and*

*work becomes too difficult) and help keep people working at the highest possible skill level rather than opt for a lower-level job. Similarly, flexibility or small adjustments in the workplace can help keep persons with a disability performing at the highest possible level.*

*It is also important to overcome any prejudices of employers with regard to these groups leading them to avoid employing people in these groups or not promoting them to the higher levels out of fear they might not cope.*

### ***A national approach***

Q9. Do we need a shared national workforce development framework to link and coordinate the range of activities being undertaken across Australia? What elements should it contain? What might be a good outcome from having a shared framework?

*Please respond here*

### ***Impact of workforce development***

Q10. What impact would a workforce development approach have for your organisation and/or industry? How might government support or facilitate change, thinking about both the productivity and the workforce participation aspects?

*Please respond here*

### ***Strategic priorities and leadership***

Q11. What is your response to our proposed strategic priorities? What are the implications for your organisation/industry? Who might take leadership responsibility for these different elements?

*Please respond here*

### ***Linking framework and funding***

Q12. How can we strengthen the linkages between government agencies and organisations responsible for education and skills on the one hand, and business development and innovation on the other? Can you envisage different program arrangements or funding flows?

*Please respond here*

### ***Other comments***

Q13. Do you have any other comments in relation to realising Australia's skill potential or issues raised in *Background Paper Two*?

*Please respond here*