

MEDIA RELEASE

Focus on Workforce Development welcomed by the Enterprise RTO Association.

The Enterprise RTO Association (ERTO) congratulates Skills Australia on release of **Australian Workforce Futures, A National Workforce Development Strategy**. ERTO is pleased to see a series of recommendations to the Government that directly address workforce capability. ERTO President Mr. Chris Butler commented that a number of the recommendations would benefit Association members, and through them would impact favorably of workforce development and capability.

ERTO is particularly pleased with the comments on 'leveraging public training funds to encourage workforce development'. In its recently released paper The role of enterprise RTOs in skilling the Australian workforce, ERTO specifically recommended extending '*...existing Government policies and incentives to explicitly encompass enterprise training pathways. This would allow the existing training investment of Australian enterprises to be leveraged into a significant contribution to the achievement of the COAG Agreement targets.*'

Mr Butler went on to comment that ERTO would welcome a system that ensured that 'perverse incentives' didn't eventuate by linking funding to achievement of qualifications or skill sets. ERTO would also like to see Government support the set up and maintenance of enterprise RTOs (e.g. to defray the set up and compliance costs for 'non-core' requirements) again linked to completion of qualifications and skill sets.

Mr Butler agreed with Skills Australia's focus on Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) arguing that addressing these blocks to productivity in the workplace was essential. 'ERTO members who have utilized the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL) have seen benefits to the

employee and the employer' he said. Up scaling the program would have obvious benefits.

Whilst ERTOA can understand the need to focus on workforce development issues for small to medium enterprises it sees a risk in any narrow focus. The models established in ERTOA members to link workforce capability and individual development to accredited outcomes has potential for transference to other businesses which have existing non-accredited training and development processes. If the models of assessment, evidence gathering and issuing of qualifications developed and implemented by ERTOA members were used more broadly in other business enterprises - large, medium and small; they would make a significant contribution to workforce capability. Mr Butler commented: 'Don't just focus on small business. Big gains can also be made in productivity by working with large and complex organizations including government agencies'. ERTOA also agrees that developing provider capacity is important, but with the proviso that a wider definition of the VET workforce is used that would include team leaders, trainers, supervisors, subject matter experts and assessors working within enterprises. These people are unlikely to self identify as VET professionals, but rather as industry and subject experts.

ERTOA would also welcome incentives that would encourage the development of knowledge amongst other providers of the specialist skills needed to assist enterprises to develop workforce capacity. The report suggests that little education and training takes place in the workplace. ERTOA would suggest this is a reflection of lack of data on workplace learning and a lack of reporting on the outcomes of enterprise RTOs. Rather than a process to 'reinvigorate and review institutional teaching and learning styles' it is time for a rethink of the existing concept of the VET workforce and VET professional.

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