

Issue 611 | 4 March 2011

## CEO Update

### Group Training in the Trades Pre-Vocational Program (GTTPP)

As many in the group training network have been aware, the status of the GTTPP has been under review since the end of calendar year 2010. This week GTA was finally advised that the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations the Hon. Chris Evans had approved a continuation of the GTTPP to 30 June 2012. Ms Christiana Knapman (Director, Pathways and Connections Team, Australian Apprenticeships Branch DEEWR) has written to me in the following terms:

*...This will enable more participants under the Program to benefit from training that will help prepare them for an Australian Apprenticeship. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations will work with current GTTPP brokers regarding arrangements for the extension. Once arrangements are in place, the Department will be able to provide further information on the anticipated number of individuals to be supported as a result of the GTTPP's continuation. It is also intended that a review of the Program will be undertaken to help inform future considerations in this area.*

On behalf of the group training network I want to thank Minister Evans and his senior adviser Tim Friedrich on making this decision to continue the Program as well as Daniel Owen and his team in the Australian Apprenticeships Branch (DEEWR) for their preparedness to engage in a robust back & forth on the issues at hand.

GTTPP is a critical program for the group training network and an important signal from the government that they are prepared to back group training. With so much talk these days about ways & means to lock in better apprenticeship completion rates the issue of pre-apprenticeships and program such as GTTPP have a place in any future policy discussions. As the Expert Panel stated in its report:

*The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' (DEEWR) internal data management system suggests that completion of a pre-apprenticeship training program may have a positive impact on completion rates for the subsequent Australian Apprenticeship, especially for those aged 24 and under. Also of note, NCVER research shows that Australian Apprentices in-study who completed a pre-apprenticeship were more likely to be planning further study related to their trade.*

*...Government investment in mainstream pre-apprenticeship training may present an opportunity to improve Australian Apprenticeship completion rates, through assisting Australian Apprenticeship candidates to be better prepared.*

GTA agrees with this statement whole-heartedly and looks forward to working closely with DEEWR in this particular policy space. We also look forward to working with all program providers in delivering high quality and high quantity outcomes in articulation into employment.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank GTTPP program manager Terry Andison for his excellent ongoing work in this area. Terry too looks forward to getting down to business.

As more information comes to hand regarding the contract extension Terry Andison will provide updates to all interested parties.

### Work Health & Safety

As we know, the Model Work Health and Safety Bill has been developed under the *Inter-Governmental*

harmonised work health and safety (WHS) framework in Australia.

Many in the network have maintained a keen interest in this issue particularly relating to legitimate questions regarding group training and the protections offered under OH&S law. Much of the debate has centred on the issue of what is meant by *reasonably practicable* and where ultimate legal responsibility lies vis a vis the host employer and the group training employer. Every now and then a particular case before a jurisdictional Industrial Court triggers a new wave of interest (and concern) across the network.

The harmonisation of all jurisdictional OH & S laws (and the potential impact on the business of group training) has concentrated the minds of both the GTA State Executive Officers and the GTA Board of Directors for some time now. Indeed at the last meetings of both groups in February, further discussion was held about what steps GTA Ltd could take to keep abreast of all the issues on behalf of the network. The final version of the model WHS Act was published by Safe Work Australia (SWA) on 26 November 2010 after consideration of submissions from stakeholders including GTA, while the draft regulations and draft codes of practice are currently out for consultation till early April. A nationally consistent compliance and enforcement policy is also currently being developed by SWA.

The Board discussed a range of issues including examining the possibility of establishing a national OH & S advisory service once national harmonisation was a reality. As well it looked at the feasibility of attempting to develop a set of national OH & S standards for group training which was also recommended by Ken Phillips when he spoke at the last group training national conference.

As you would appreciate, options such as these raise a number of questions, not the least of which is resourcing such an exercise, which deserve serious consideration. The Board also agreed that, if GTA was able to engage and possibly even partner with other groups and stakeholders examining the same issues on behalf of their members (for example, in concert with GTA State Associations, Industry groups and the like), then it should do so.

GTA will be keeping a tight watching brief on this matter and has begun to initiate preliminary discussions with relevant parties on the possibility of 'national standards' and investigating what other groups and associations are doing in this space.

Clearly if anything breaks in this critical area I will advise the network.

## Expert Panel Roundtable

Yesterday in Canberra I attended the inaugural Apprenticeships for the 21st Century Panel Roundtable with other stakeholders.

As you will recall the Expert Panel last week released its long awaited report *A shared responsibility – apprenticeships for the 21st century*. Upon the release of the report the government announced that it would be conducting a series of national consultations to assist it in formulating its response. It will also call for submissions. The Canberra meeting was the kick-off in that overall consultation process.

Key stakeholders ACCI, Ai Group, ACTU, BCA, MBA, HIA, MCA and GTA were joined by Panel members Messrs Dave Oliver (Chair), Tim Shipstone and John Buchanan and Mmes Simone Wetzler and Marie Persson, along with senior DEEWR officials Andrew Lalor, Michael Maynard and Daniel Owen.

It was an excellent consultation with a high degree of constructive engagement from all parties. Key areas covered from the report included: the National Custodian; clarification of roles and responsibilities of all key stakeholders; enhanced support structures for employers of apprentices and for apprentices themselves; apprenticeship support services; establishment of an accreditation process for employers of apprentices;

training; competency based training and a refocusing of VET in schools.

Kudos to all involved. GTA and the group training network very much look forward to engaging in the process from here on in. Once further details are available regarding next steps in consultations and the call for submissions, I will advise.

For some additional reporting on the Panel's findings click the following to read:

[Apprenticeships need fundamental reform: expert panel](#)

[Apprenticeship completion rates challenged](#)

Moreover, [here](#) is a recent radio interview on Radio National focusing on the report's findings featuring excellent, robust and hard-hitting contributions from RMIT's Dr Alan Montague and a former GTA *Today's Skills: Tomorrow's Leaders* participant and mature age commercial chef James Fairbanks.

## ACCI on mature age workers

Recently the Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ACCI) released an important report into engagement and retention strategies for mature age and existing worker apprentices and the development of options for employers that actively encourage employment and retention of mature age and existing worker apprentices. *It's not about age – Pathways for engagement in employing mature age people and existing workers as apprentices: an employer perspective.*

In presenting the report, ACCI's Director – Employment, Education and Training Mary Hicks stated:

*Future competitiveness in the skilled workforce will rest partly on the performance and productivity of ageing workforces and, therefore, on the efficient utilisation of older workers. While there are cyclical pressures on the labour market that create fluctuations in the supply of labour, in the long term Australia must maximise the numbers of skilled working age people in the workforce.*

*Employers need to develop innovative strategies to attract and retain valued employees to meet the vital skills needs of their business now and for the future. The research for the project showed that it is possible for employers to take a positive and systematic approach to engaging with mature age and existing worker apprentices and clearly identifies the benefits to employers in terms of increased productivity and greater retention of skilled staff.*

ACCI is to be congratulated on this work. This particular policy space will be critical to Australia's future. It is a good read and I encourage you all to have a good look at it.

To access the report you can go to [www.acci.asn.au](http://www.acci.asn.au)

## TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute

This Tuesday TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute celebrated its 120th birthday. The Sydney Technical College (as it was originally known) first opened its doors in 1891. Institute Director David Riordan and the Minister for Education the Hon. Verity Firth did a stellar job in giving a packed house a fascinating history lesson of TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute's extraordinary contribution to the city of Sydney, to Australia and to skills development.

Sydney Institute has had over 900,000 students pass through its doors beginning with an original

announcement that 120 Sydney Institute Ambassadors had been appointed to represent TAFE NSW throughout 2011. All the Ambassadors are former graduates of the Institute and are now leaders in their field.

As you would expect, many senior NSW GTO executives were in attendance. Bravo to them, bravo to Sydney Institute and bravo to Skills One and its CEO Brian Wexham who was responsible for the impressive video presentations on the night.

## All the News that Fits

[Treasurer's Economic Note](#) – an on-line around the grounds report from Treasurer Swan

[3,000 new apprenticeships – skills for growth](#) – NSW Labor's election policy on skills

[Keneally's TAFE election promise an insult to teachers and students](#) – the Greens response

[NSW government announcement on TAFE](#) – the Teachers Federation response

[Shadow Minister signs TAFE 5 point plan](#) – the Opposition also shows its hand to an extent

[TAFE union, bosses fear VET regulator will be 'TESQSA' lite](#) – more on the national VET regulator

**Jim Barron**

## General News Update

### Australian Apprentice stats – September quarter 2010

The number of Australians starting apprenticeships and traineeships has increased by 33.4 per cent in the year to September 2010.

All the details are in NCVER's recent publication *Australian vocational education and training statistics: Apprentices and trainees, September quarter 2010*, which may be of interest to you.

To download a copy of this publication, please visit [www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2346.html](http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2346.html) - please note that you will have to log in to NCVER's website to access a copy.

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### Looking Ahead – 2011 Group Training National Conference

Registration is now open for the 2011 Group Training National Conference in Melbourne from 19-21 October 2011.

Conference information and registration is available at:  
[http://www.grouptraining.com.au/Events\\_and\\_media/2011nationalconference](http://www.grouptraining.com.au/Events_and_media/2011nationalconference)



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