

SKILL SETS FOR THE RESOURCES SECTOR AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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This report explores the relevance of training in skill sets as part of an overall workforce development strategy for the resources sector in Western Australia. It identifies some operational roles particularly suited to skill sets training and reviews the 2012/13 vocation education and training (VET) policies in light of these, identifying possible reforms for greater skill sets application.

ACTIVITY

Research into the applicability and usage of skill sets in Western Australia's resources sector was conducted through stakeholder interviews, supplemented by a literature review. Statistical data was also collected to attempt to determine actual skill sets usage by individuals in publicly funded VET resources sector courses.

FINDINGS

What are Skill Sets?

Skill sets are *an emerging intermediate product of the VET system and co-exist with qualifications and units of competency. They can be defined as a grouping of one or more units of competency, fewer than those needed to achieve a qualification, that meet the skills development needs of an individual in an enterprise, or industry sector.* Skill sets prepare individuals to perform a specific job function and have direct relevance to their job roles.

Use of Skill Sets

With a large number of projects

transitioning from construction to operations from 2013 to 2018, operating companies are faced with building worker capability, participation and performance.

Skill sets training has the potential to provide flexibility, efficiencies and responsiveness to client skill needs, particularly during times when there is a shortage of workers capable of undertaking specific job roles, without the attainment of full qualifications and the development of skills which may not be needed in the context of specific job roles.

The mining and oil and gas industries use skill sets to fill operator roles where a license is all that is required, for multi-technical skilling purposes driven by new technology, to meet regulatory requirements and enable workers to take on additional safety roles and responsibilities, and to enable workers to perform multiple job-roles such as training or supervision.

Job Roles

Resources sector companies think in terms of job roles and the competencies required for performance of the roles safely, efficiently and effectively. The use of skill sets training in the sector is **not to the exclusion of full qualifications**, rather an addition that targets role specific skills development which can be used as a stepping stone to a qualification and post qualification attainment and be of benefit to the overall resources sector workforce development.

Operational roles particularly suited to skill sets training differ due to distinct worker skill demographic required within the mining and the oil and gas

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industries. Many people employed in the oil and gas industry are highly skilled tertiary qualified managers and professionals and VET qualified technicians and trades persons. In this sector, skill sets are predominantly used to meet *Safety Case* regime requirements, to multi-skill or up-skill already qualified persons in line with job role changes and higher role promotions, and for a small proportion of entry-level machine operator job roles.

Conversely, the mining industry directly employs a large number of people into entry level machine operator and driver roles. Equally large is the intake of qualified trades persons and technicians entering mining from other industry sectors, making skill sets training an operationally appropriate solution to meet these job role requirements. Skill sets are also used to up-skill existing workers particularly into on the job trainer and supervisor roles, to meet regulatory requirements and acquire specific safety related licences.

Interestingly, the study found a significant number of WA publicly funded VET resources sector students only completed partial qualifications in surface operations and oil and gas

operations at Certificate II and Certificate III levels between 2009 and 2011, suggesting a sub-qualification outcome met their skilling requirements.

Policy Barriers

Western Australia has no clear skill set agenda.

The needs of the resources sector and the needs of regional industry requiring non-traditional trade occupations are disadvantaged by the current funding framework which funds full qualifications rather than skill sets.

The recognition of skill sets as a subset of a nationally recognised qualification is critical to mitigating skill shortages as these enable enterprises to fill occupational roles in the sector and can provide the basis for forming a full qualification and contributing to a broader workforce development strategy allowing individuals to transfer between job roles and even occupations.

Australia's VET statistical collection has capacity to report skill set utilisation. However, it is understood not all states and territories will mandate this.

GOING FORWARD

A more consistent public funding

of enterprise/RTO developed skill sets in training packages should be considered.

Skill sets training should be available for resource workers below Certificate III level for whom skill sets training is the most efficient and effective application of available training resources.

Policy decisions on skill sets needs to be evidence based, reported as an outcome from VET.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Skill sets and qualifications to be promoted and recognised as an integral part of an overall workforce development strategy to fill operator roles, keep pace with new skill needs due to technology, meet regulatory requirements and multi-skill workers for broader job roles.

Continued collection of industry intelligence on skill sets needs and training to influence the review of training packages at national and state levels, supported with evidence based data for skill sets recognition in training packages where they currently do not exist.

An appraisal of existing funding structures to include fit-for-purpose skill sets constructed from units of competency within the formal VET system, as these add to employability and are transferable skills to further training or other employment situations.

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