

From the Aged Services Industry Reference Committee

Dear Stakeholder in Aged Care,

Proposed Next Steps for the Work of the Aged Services Industry Reference Committee in 2020

We are almost a year into our work as the Aged Services Industry Reference Committee (IRC), appointed by the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC) to address training and workforce issues in the Aged Care sector.

In response to the recommendations detailed in the *A Matter of Care* report produced by the Aged Care Workforce Strategy Taskforce, the Aged Care Training Package Product development project is now well underway. The project comprises two distinct phases:

- **Phase 1**, which has involved an examination of how the current Units of Competency within the *Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing)* can be re-packaged to better address the skills needs of industry, and
- **Phase 2**, which will involve a comprehensive and complete review and update of all the Units of Competency relevant to Aged Care, including determining appropriate career pathways and career development opportunities for workers within the sector.

The Aged Services IRC has now completed the work outlined in **Phase 1**, which was centred around an immediate review of the *Certificate III in Individual Support* and the proposed (by the brief arising from the Task Force report) development of a new qualification, designed to ensure that graduates would be competent in the relevant skills needed to begin working in the Aged Care industry.

As a result of the input and feedback from stakeholders like you, the Aged Services IRC has entered into discussions with the Disability Support IRC who have agreed that a single qualification for use by workers in the Aged Care and Disability sectors is more appropriate, with elective options appropriate to both streams and core Units of Competency common to both sectors. Both these IRC's now plan to enter into further discussion with the Direct Client Care and Support IRC who retain the remit over qualification in the Home and Community sector.

As a result of the recommendations of stakeholders in response to Drafts 1 and 2 of the revised aged care qualification, we now propose to make minor changes only to the *Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing)* by making a significant reduction in the number of permitted elective units to ensure these are much more targeted towards the skills workers will need in the Aged Care sector. This will prevent RTOs from offering electives that may be easy to deliver but are, on all of the available advice, insufficiently targeted to the needs of our sector's workforce. This will also mean that the IRC will now be able to shift our collective focus to **Phase 2**, which will look at the remaining Aged Care-related Training Package Products to ensure that they too are fit for purpose and meet the ongoing needs of industry.

The Aged Services IRC is assisted by a series of Specific Interest Advisory Committees (SIACs) and sub-groups to support its mandate. The individuals who sit on these SIACs provide high-level strategic and policy advice to the IRC and are committed to addressing the gaps in the skills of the Aged Care workforce as made evident in the interim report issued by the *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety* and tabled in Parliament on 31 October 2019.

In terms of **Phase 2**, instead of leaping into the usual process of reviewing and redrafting qualifications for consideration, the IRC is **intending to invite further comment and feedback** on some major issues facing the sector via its various SIACs, with the intention of developing discussion papers to determine and identify the specific workforce skills gaps and requirements within the sector. Phase 2 will also see us responding to suggestions for more substantial change to the Certificate III than we were able to do in the rapid review conducted this year. We are very mindful of the many suggestions for change to individual units and to the composition of the mandatory and elective components of the qualification. Whilst it was not possible to act on them in phase 1, it means that we start the Phase 2 work with a rich repository of amendments suggested by stakeholders.

Proposed Discussion Papers and Related SIACs

The resultant discussion papers will be used for broader industry engagement and feedback. These papers will take the form of an evidence-based rapid review, using systematic approaches to synthesise information from both published, peer-reviewed and 'grey literature' sources on topics structured around the key review questions, as follows:

1. Work Placements

This multi-faceted discussion paper will seek to explore numerous avenues in order to build a picture of the state of the sector in terms of the experience gained by individual workers when work placements are initiated. It aims to establish:

- a. whether the training acquired by the trainee is in line with industry requirements
- b. whether the trainees are performing tasks at the worksite set out in their overall training plan
- c. whether trainees ultimately take up employment in the areas in which they have obtained training
- d. what the successful models of work-placement are within the sector
- e. what the constant challenges are in terms of accessing work placements, and where the best practice models are to be found internationally from which Australia can learn, and
- f. what role work placements play in the acquisition of workers' knowledge and skills, and what issues impact on the availability and recruitment of prospective workers.

2. 'Re-imagined' Workers

The sub-group established to look at the whole area of Consumer-directed Care (CDC) is working to develop a discussion paper defining the skills an Aged Care worker needs to have based on the needs of the consumers he or she is hired to assist. This sub-group will seek to identify both current and predicted consumer needs, and the attendant knowledge and skills that will be required to provide quality care now and in the future.

This paper will serve as a barometer to assist in determining the actual uptake of Aged Care-related qualifications and Units of Competency and highlight the movement of learners/employees across and within the various sub-sectors of the Aged Care industry. It will also look at the extent to which it is reasonable - or even possible - to provide a full range of skills to a single worker to meet the diverse needs of consumers in the future and how we can ensure both adequacy and consistency in the provision of service through the use of multidisciplinary teams.

3. Pathways and Tertiary Education SIAC (PATESIAC)

The PATESIAC discussion paper will focus on research relating to job clustering, and look at ways of making it easier for learners/employees to transition from the VET sector through to Higher Education in order to gain university-level qualifications.

It will also look at how we can best construct VET qualifications that will assist learners and industry in building job roles and pathways whilst at the same avoiding unnecessary duplication or hindering the easy development of qualifications relevant to newly-developing roles.

4. Nutrition and the Mealtime Experience SIAC (NAMESIAC)

The NAMESIAC discussion paper will investigate industry's appetite for the development of Training Package Products specific to nutrition within the Aged Care sector. It will look at improving performance in relation to nutrition and the mealtime experience as well as factors impacting on both the health and social outcomes of many clients in the sector. Ultimately, it will look at how best we can build competence across all the job roles, from kitchen to table, given the variety of ways that individual workers intersect with their clients' nutrition and mealtime requirements.

Timeframes and feedback

It is envisaged that these discussion papers will be available between February and April 2020 as a precursor to the detailed work of qualification development and redesign. **Your feedback will be invaluable, so please keep an eye out for these papers next year, which will be emailed to you by SkillsIQ, together with instructions on next steps.**

Meanwhile, if you are aware of any areas of innovation related to the delivery of education and training in Aged Care, particularly in, but not exclusive to, the areas listed above, please let us know as soon as possible, and ideally by the end of January, 2020.

Skills Organisations

A recommendation from the *Strengthening Skills: Expert Review of Australia's Vocational Education and Training System* ('the Joyce report') was that the government consider setting up 'industry-owned' Skills Organisations to lead the proposed VET reform process. This recommendation was actioned by the Federal Government with a decision announced in the budget to pilot Skills Organisations in selected areas – including relevantly, Human Services.

As a result, the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business' Skills Organisation (SO) implementation team has proceeded to establish a steering committee comprising 5 employers for the Skills Organisation in Human Services.

Our IRC met with representatives from the Department on Wednesday, 18 December to map a way forward in terms of a collaborative approach between the IRC and the newly established SO over the coming 2 years. Our intention is to ensure that there is no duplication of effort, given that we will be operating concurrently in the months ahead. We will keep all stakeholders informed as to developments, and we encourage you to contact the IRC via SkillsIQ with any questions relating to these recent developments.

Many thanks to the many hundreds of you that participated in our consultation and feedback sessions during 2019. We look forward to moving from strength to strength in 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Robert Bonner', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Robert Bonner,
Acting Chair, Aged Services IRC