# Skilled Workforce for the ACT

## ACT Skills and Training Policy Directions Paper

### FOREWORD

The ACT Government is committed to increasing the skills of the ACT workforce to ensure the Territory’s economic and social prosperity. To do this, we need a flexible and responsive training sector that delivers high quality training which meets the needs of industry and business, current and prospective students, and the broader ACT community.

We are undertaking an ambitious program of reform to ensure we attain even higher levels of performance in the ACT training sector. We are deepening engagement with industry. We have a strong evidence base to allow us to target funding to support training in areas of highest need. We have developed a framework to ensure the quality of training provision in the Territory. We will increase access to training for all Canberrans through the funded training initiative *Skilled Capital*.

From 2015, *Skilled Capital* introduces a comprehensive approach to improving access and support for those experiencing disadvantage, and maximising success. By better aligning funding for training to areas of skills need, the initiative aims to increase the productivity of the ACT through greater workforce participation. In conjunction with the existing training options available at the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) and through the Australian Apprenticeships (User Choice) Program, *Skilled Capital* will provide an entitlement to training for all in the ACT.

For the individual, access to education and training can have a life-changing effect. The ACT Government is committed to supporting all Canberrans to achieve such change through an adaptive and contemporary training sector.

Joy Burch MLA

Minister for Education and Training

### **SKILLING THE ACT WORKFORCE**

The ACT is a small territory with a unique economic profile and one of the most educated populations in the country. Canberra already benefits from a strong and dynamic publicly subsidised training sector. This sector provides training for over 30,000 students annually through public and private training organisations. These training organisations are also a large contributor to the local workforce, employing 1,500 people directly.

However, as the needs of industry change, so should the focus of the training sector to ensure those needs are met. Flexibility of training provision and informed choice for industry and students is vital to maximise training outcomes and to maximise the productivity of the ACT workforce.

Reforms are underway to ensure a strong ACT training sector provides quality opportunities for people to access flexible training to enhance their career prospects. In a time of limited resources, it is also important for the ACT to continue to find efficiencies in how training can best be supported to ensure its ongoing sustainability.

## **THE BENEFITS OF A SKILLED WORKFORCE**

A high quality vocational education and training sector benefits not only those undertaking training, but every part of society.

#### Individuals and Families

* Enhanced employment prospects & career advancements
* Increased self esteem
* Support for family stability
* Increased earning capacity

#### ACT Community

* Increased local prosperity & community development through higher employment levels
* Enhanced social & human capital
* Promotion of community engagement
* Decreased need for welfare support

#### ACT Business

* Skills to meet immediate & future needs through targeted training
* Enhanced outcomes from upskilled staff
* Improved attraction & retention of staff

#### Economic Growth

* Improved workforce participation
* Support for innovation & creativity
* Contribution to productivity
* Support for emerging industries

### **TRAINING OPTIONS**

A number of government supported training pathways are available to the ACT community. From 2015, the ACT Government will increase access to training through the new *Skilled Capital* training initiative, to complement the existing training options available at CIT and through the Australian Apprenticeships (User Choice) Program.

#### **Australian Apprenticeships** (User Choice)

The national funding policy for the Australian Apprenticeships Program is User Choice.

User Choice funding in the ACT is available for certificate II to diploma level qualifications in a variety of occupations.

The ACT Government will continue to support Australian Apprenticeships, which maximise the benefits obtained through quality training taking place in conjunction with employment.

#### **Skilled Capital**

The *Skilled Capital* initiative will offer a comprehensive range of services to provide Canberrans the support they need to complete the training that is right for them.

The ACT Government has allocated $21 million over three years from 2015 for the commencement of *Skilled Capital*.

*Skilled Capital* will improve access to high quality training in areas of skills needs and maximise improved employment outcomes.

#### **Canberra Institute of Technology** (CIT)

CIT is the public training provider in the ACT.

CIT delivers hundreds of qualifications to a diverse range of students subsidised by the ACT Government.

The provision of training through CIT is a vital element in the government’s commitment to assisting a diverse range of Canberrans to be part of a well-trained and highly skilled workforce which supports the ACT economy.

Significant reform activities to further enhance training delivery at CIT include:

* new governance arrangements to position CIT to better respond to an environment of greater competition in serving the ACT community, industry and business
* a comprehensive campus modernisation strategy including a new contemporary facility in Tuggeranong
* the introduction of income contingent loans for students undertaking higher level qualifications, ensuring that fees are not a barrier to training.

### **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

The ACT Government wants to ensure all Canberrans have the opportunity to upskill and work to their maximum potential, through a vibrant, accessible and flexible training sector.

The benefits for the ACT community will include stronger labour market outcomes (employment and earnings), better health and improved life satisfaction, and higher levels of social and community engagement.

The ACT Government has defined the key skills and training policy directions for the Territory. These key directions align with national priorities and focus on:

* Strengthening engagement with industry, business and other stakeholders to maximise training and employment outcomes
* Targeting government funding to support training in areas of highest needs to best provide the skills needed by industry, students and the ACT community
* Ensuring training delivered in the ACT is of the highest quality
* Providing better access to training with additional supports to promote completions, particularly for those experiencing disadvantage.

### **Engage**

Improved engagement between government, industry, students, training providers and the community is vital to ensure a skilled workforce for the ACT. One of the biggest challenges is raising the profile of vocational education and training and ensuring its benefits are understood throughout the community and the business and industry sectors. It is vital that training produces the quality skilled graduates that industry requires. Engagement with key stakeholders will enable government and training providers to ensure subsidised training is delivered in areas of skills need, maximising the return on government investment in training. The training needs of industry and business are evolving. The ACT Government also recognises that responses by the training sector will require increased sophistication and flexibility.

The ACT Government will:

* Strengthen the capacity of the public provider to respond to industry and community needs through a more contemporary governance structure
* Improve pathways into training for job seekers by facilitating improved links between training organisations and employment service providers
* Increase government responsiveness to industry and inform policy through dedicated consultation mechanisms
* Improve information exchange between industry, community and government through the establishment of the Industry Liaison Unit
* Support industry involvement in training and assessment practices through the development and pilot of models of independent industry validation of assessment practices
* Improve the identification of current and emerging skills and training needs through the use of industry intelligence.

### **Target**

To maximise the benefits of training, it is vital government funding is appropriately targeted to support high quality training in areas of skills need most likely to lead to improved employment outcomes.

The ACT Government will:

* Ensure the best use of government support for training through a comprehensive evidence base
* Target training support to meet the needs of ACT industry, students and employers
* Increase access to training in areas of highest skills need
* Support learners to complete their qualifications and improve employment prospects
* Promote the uptake of Australian Apprenticeships in highest skills needs qualifications
* Increase the provision of contestable training support to realise the benefits of a more competitive training market
* Support the public provider to meet the needs of the ACT community through a comprehensive modernisation strategy.

### **Quality**

The ACT Government is committed to ensuring Canberrans have access to quality skills training. The provision of high quality training by public and private providers will raise the profile of vocational education and training, identifying it as an outstanding pathway to achieve career success. The ACT Government is already a significant contributor to national streamlined information exchange between governments, students and other stakeholders through initiatives such as MySkills. From 2015 the introduction of the Unique Student Identifier will inform policy and support informed student choice.

The ACT Government will:

* Ensure training providers are committed to the delivery of high quality training through the implementation of a comprehensive quality framework
* Implement performance-based regulation to maintain high industry standards and build further confidence in the ACT training sector
* Enable informed choice for learners through better access to quality information on training pathways/opportunities
* Support the public provider to implement a comprehensive modernisation strategy including contemporary facilities delivering quality outcomes
* Reduce red-tape for training providers and key stakeholders through a streamlined web-based administration system
* Ensure a seamless training pathway from secondary to post-secondary education through a comprehensive examination of training delivery within schools.

### **Access**

The ACT Government is committed to increasing access to training in areas of skills need through a people-centred approach to training delivery. For some there are barriers to undertaking training and completing a qualification. It is vital that these barriers are broken down to ensure Canberrans can access training and receive the support they need to successfully complete their qualification.

The ACT Government will:

* Increase the opportunity for individuals experiencing disadvantage to undertake and complete training
* Ensure fees are not a barrier to undertaking training in higher level qualifications through the introduction of income contingent loans
* Provide foundation skills training for all students who need it through dedicated funding in *Skilled Capital*
* Provide contemporary facilities for the public provider to support flexible training options and quality outcomes to meet student needs
* Maximise qualification completions through a comprehensive approach to access and support with additional funding for those experiencing disadvantage
* Enable ACT citizens to choose the training option that is right for them by increasing informed student choice of training providers.

### **THE FUTURE**

The ACT Government acknowledges the fundamental importance of training to the Territory.

Canberra in the 21st century is a growing, dynamic and diversifying economy and community. Our continued growth will demand increased traditional skills to support all sectors of the community. The ACT Skills Needs List identifies priorities to assist in targeting educational resourcing in these areas.

Canberra is also uniquely placed to benefit from the emerging industries of the 21st century. Our ability to harness these opportunities will be vital to our continued economic diversity. This will demand new skills and new vocational education and training perspectives to deliver these skills.

Our commitment through the skills reform agenda is to ensure we have a motivated, high quality vocational education and training environment within the ACT. Broad industry and community engagement will be essential in achieving our shared ambitions.

Skills reform in the ACT, including the commencement of the *Skilled Capital* initiative, will ensure Canberrans have improved access to training of the highest quality in areas of skills need that respond to industry demands.

Ultimately these reform activities will deliver a more highly skilled workforce for the ACT, further enhancing the social and economic outcomes for the ACT community.

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