

Background – about TAC – Suggested Chair response at commencement of proceedings

The Training Accreditation Council (the Council) is Western Australia's registering and course accrediting body responsible for the quality assurance and recognition of vocational education and training (VET) services in WA.

The Council regulates Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) that operate solely in WA and this includes the network of State owned TAFE Colleges. Providers that operate across other States and Territories or deliver to international students are regulated by the national VET regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), noting that no providers are regulated by more than one regulator.

All RTOs, regardless of their VET Regulator, are required to meet compliance requirements set out in the *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015*.

In WA two (2) VET Regulators, TAC and the national VET regulator, ASQA, have responsibility for the regulation of providers. This arrangement resulted from the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) decision in late 2009 to endorse the establishment of a national regulator for the VET sector through the referral of State powers to the Commonwealth.

WA has continued to regulate those providers who operate only in this State.

As at 20 October 2017, 442 RTOs have their head office in WA. Of these,

- 235 (53%) are regulated by TAC, and
- 207 (47%) are regulated by ASQA.

Of the 235 RTO regulated by TAC, 36 RTOs (15%) deliver training products linked to high risk work.

Key to TAC's regulatory approach is responding to State based priorities and risks in a timely manner. As a regulator, TAC's primary role is to assure the

quality of training services delivered in the VET sector in WA through the effective regulation of providers and accredited courses.

For example, in 2015 WorkSafe WA and the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of WA (CME) wrote to the Council and met with TAC Secretariat staff raising concerns about the quality of training and assessment linked to the issuance of High Risk Work Licences (HRWLs) in WA.

I have with me 8 copies of the audit report for the committee's consideration.

The SIA targeted 10 units of competency across dogging, rigging, scaffolding, elevated work platforms and crane operations. The SIA strategy was extended to include surveys of RTOs, students, stakeholders and employers and the survey data was used to provide some context to the characteristics of the industry that may or may not impact on the quality of nationally recognised training and assessment services provided by RTOs.

In regard to the SIA's outcomes, the proportion of providers in this SIA with an overall level of non-compliance that was significant or critical (35%), and the proportion of providers with at least one non-compliance relating to assessment (55%) raised significant concern.

Given the nature of the training provided in the context of high risk work and associated safety implications, the unease and concern expressed by industry stakeholders was justified.

Outcomes of this audit strategy were shared with WorkSafe, CME, the Australian Industry and Skills Committee (AISC), Industry Reference Committees, Skills Service Organisations (SSOs), Safe Work Australia, and other VET Regulators.

TAC is aware that the outcomes of this SIA has informed the current review process for units of competency and Training Packages in this industry area. We know this because the relevant SSOs have said so during consultation meetings held in WA with TAC Secretariat staff present.

Audit outcomes

The majority of RTOs that were audited were able to demonstrate compliance to the TAC and two RTOs were removed from the system. For the six RTOs that were initially found significantly or critically noncompliant but were subsequently able to rectify the non-compliances a follow up monitoring audit was undertaken within 12 months to check that the compliant systems had been implemented. At the follow up audits 4 RTOs were found to be compliant and two RTOs required further review of their systems.

Training linked to high risk work continues to be monitored by TAC.

In fact the TAC Annual Regulatory Strategy, a document published annually which outlines TAC's priority and focus areas, includes a statement that "...in response to industry and stakeholder concerns and outcomes from TAC Strategic Industry Audit initiatives, all applications to add units of competency linked to the issuance of HRWLs will require a site audit.

Any adverse findings or matters of concern in regard to any providers regulated by TAC delivering in this industry area are shared with WorkSafe.

Having been in the position to access previous transcripts of Committee hearings, we have also prepared a simple overview of the bodies and responsibilities held in relation to the endorsement of training products relating to high risk work licenses, the role of Worksafe, the role of TAC and the role of the assessors. I present this information for the committee.