



Forest, Wood, Paper and Timber Products Industry Skills Enhancement and Training (SET) Project

THE SET Project has been a four-year research and development program to enhance skills and training, and develop career pathways in the forest, wood, paper and timber products industry.

While the project was carried out across Tasmanian industry, it was designed to deliver benefits to the forest industry nationally.

The major benefit of the SET project was the provision of professional and expert support and advice to enterprises, training providers and a wider range of other stakeholders. This enhanced the level of knowledge, engagement, trust and partnership between the Tasmanian forest industry enterprises and local and national service providers including Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), Australian Apprenticeship Centres (AACs), Group Training Organisations (GTOs), and Job Services Australia (JSAs).

This increased positive skill,



training, career and employment outcomes for the forest industry.

The project created a learning platform and provided access to a range of skill development activities leading to more

qualifications for workers across the forest industry. The best practice models and lessons learnt regarding a sustainable industry based skill ecosystem will be of ongoing benefit to industry.



CASE STUDY

Opportunities in the industry

IN 2008, Hannah Wiggins was a Grade 9 student at Oatlands District High School who applied to participate in the Grow Your Career Program. At the time Hannah's career aspiration was to be an airline flight attendant.

After four days and three nights of intense interaction with all aspects of the forest industry followed by a three-day work experience in the corporate relations and tourism department of Forestry Tasmania, Hannah was identified as an outstanding participant in the program and awarded an industry sponsored bursary.

In 2009, Hannah and the other bursary winners participated in

an extension program for Young Forest Leaders that included attendance at a specialist youth leadership two day workshop and also the Forest Futures Conference in Canberra.

Hannah is currently completing a School Based Apprenticeship as part of her year 11 studies by undertaking a Certificate II in Business with her host employer Forestry Tasmania. Hannah now wishes to pursue a career in forest industries media and public relations.

"Young people need to recognise the opportunities and different aspects of the forest industry in the same way I have been



privileged," Hannah says. "Without youth in the industry there is no future."

Hannah Wiggins .. career in forest industries media.



Enterprise Engagement Process

This process is used in all aspects of enterprise interaction of the SET project and could be broadly applied to any sector of any industry where resources are available. This model used by the SET project is labour intensive as face-to-face visits are crucial. Generally several visits to a particular enterprise are required.

Grow Your Career Program

Industry had identified the need to provide attractive career pathways for students and this program was an effective way of showcasing the opportunities within the forest industry. The primary focus of the program was to allow high school students who had completed an application process the opportunity to experience the various sectors of the industry and, with assistance, to identify potential career pathways.

Pre Employment Program

This program allowed for carefully selected job seekers to gain experience and enterprise specific skills through customised training for a career in a Greenfield site. The program gave applicants the opportunity to experience the workplace prior to employment and employers to access the best possible candidates for positions available.

Worker Assistance Program

This program provided workers who have been made redundant with the best possible opportunity to re-skill and find a new career path and new employment. It is designed to operate in a situation of mass redundancy, usually across a whole site. Key to this process is the appointment of a coordinator from the affected workplace who has as part of the program been trained to provide assistance to fellow workers.

Career Enhancement Program

This program relies on a strong mentor from industry to provide ongoing assistance in partnership with a RTO to trainees and

Project best practice models delivered by the SET project



employers to improve completion and retention rates in the harvesting and haulage sector. The program minimises barriers for small business which generally don't have a dedicated HR specialist within their workforce.

Forest Operators Assessment and Licensing Scheme (FOALS)

Industry had identified that the existing system needed to be improved and brought in line with nationally recognised skills standards. The SET project managed this process on behalf of industry utilising strong industry knowledge and participation of a large number of industry trainers and assessors to ensure that FOALS licence endorsements can be recognised for the issuing of

statements of attainment or form part of a qualification.

Lessons Learnt from the Project

Lesson 1: Workforce Development is a Key to Success.

Ongoing workforce development is an essential activity by an enterprise to maintain competitiveness. To manage the workforce development process effectively, and sustainably, enterprises and the industry need to have access to resources that support them and that reduce the barriers between the major partners of the skill system.

Lesson 2: Sound Business Cases Need to Exist.

A business case needs to exist for each of the three partners of

the skill ecosystem (enterprises, training providers, VET sector) to justify their engagement in workforce development activities.

Lesson 3: VET Sector and Industry Engagement is Vital.

Enterprise input into the training system is vital so as the VET sector can be an active and efficient partner within the skill ecosystem. The VET sector also needs assistance to identify and rectify gaps in training delivery capacity to ensure that models of delivery are relevant to enterprise needs.

Lesson 4: Career Promotion is Complex.

Career promotion and recruitment are complex components of the workforce development process. In most instances, industry and enterprises need specialised assistance to successfully promote its job roles and career pathways, particularly in a skill and labour shortage environment. It may appear to be a simple exercise, but the SET project has learnt that it is not.

Lesson 5: Learning is a Pathway not a Destination.

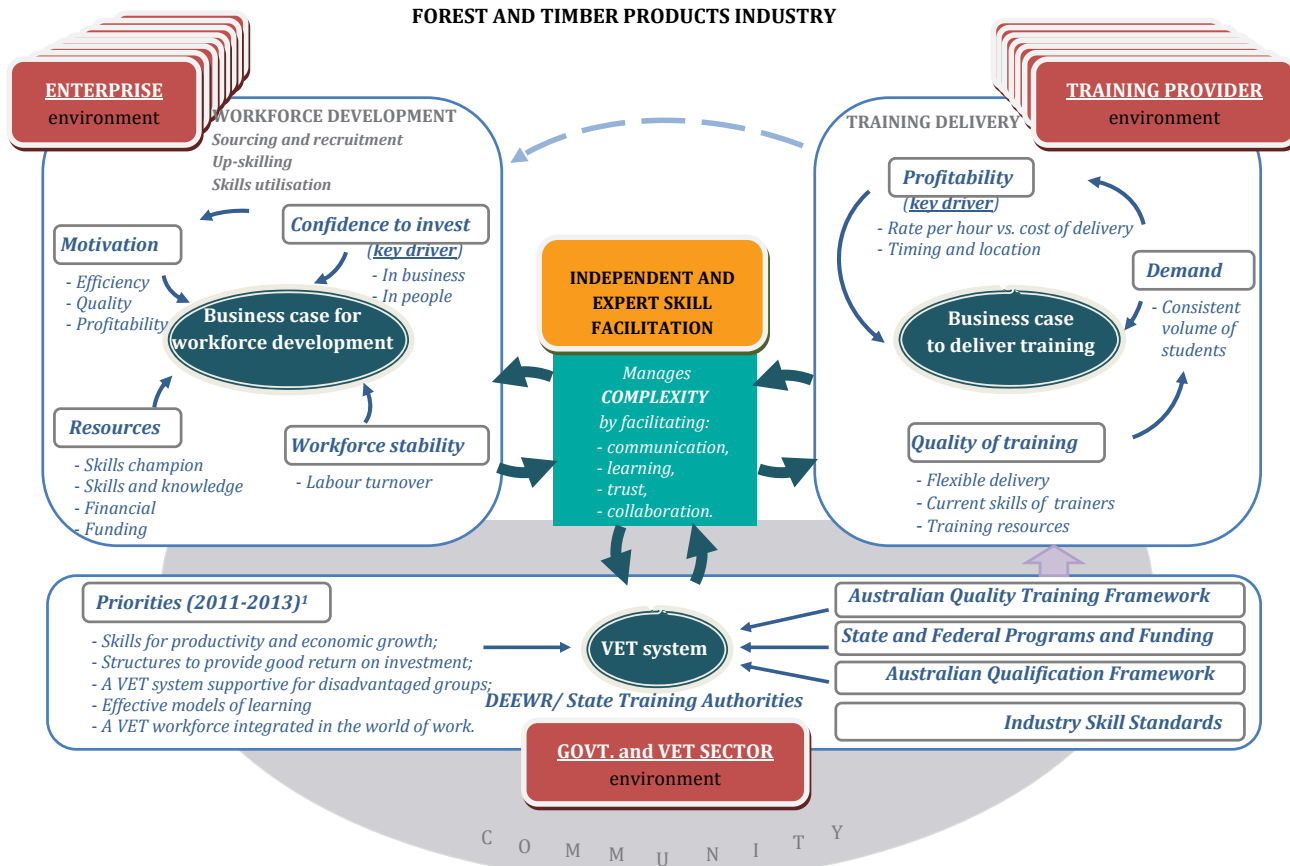
Skills development, learning and training can be a pathway to new work, self satisfaction and a sense of achievement. When it is not, or once it has secured new employment it loses its role. Many non completions of qualifications occur because the training course has achieved its aim – a new job, the qualification was never the aim. Training is desirable particularly if supported by the potential to secure immediate employment post training rather than training for training sake.

Lesson 6: Stability of Personnel is Critical.

The skill ecosystem relies upon knowledge, experience, relationships and influence. These all change when "players" in the skill ecosystem change. An ecosystem needs a degree of stability to function and if this is threatened by excessive labour turnover at any level, the business cases that were once sound and supported are difficult to sustain.



MODEL OF EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE SKILL ECOSYSTEM FOR FOREST AND TIMBER PRODUCTS INDUSTRY



Insights into the model of effective workforce development and skill ecosystem

Workforce development is a complex process, and requires complex mechanisms and procedures to manage them. This is a challenge to many who would prefer to believe that workforce development should be/could be a simple process.

Complexity is apparent with any workforce development initiative via a range of challenging situations which are part of the workforce development process itself and additional mechanisms and aspects that sit behind the process, such as:

- the VET system, which manages specific structures for training, assessment and recognition procedures, and introduces specific rules, regulations and controls in terms of learning/training, delivery environments and the quality of training

provided.

- VET programs and funding models supported by governments where the rules and opportunities they offer are confusing in most cases and not reasonably transparent to industry.

- the nature of the technical skills required by this industry, which is highly industry specific, carrying the particular characteristics of each individual sector, and evolving with the latest technological developments.

- the regional and nationally dispersed character of this industry, which makes the service of training delivery complex as in many regions and skill areas the demand for training is not high enough or consistent enough to attract sustained investment

from training providers (travel time and costs are high and student enrolments are low).

Complexity originates in each organisational entity which make up the skill ecosystem (enterprises, RTOs/AACs, governments) and generates reciprocal impacts into both industry and VET sector environments, with consequences experienced across the ecosystem.

The SET Project experience showed that enterprises, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), rarely have the capacity to manage workforce development processes on their own and seldom have the knowledge to use the VET funding models and the various opportunities they present. In most cases,

these enterprises also confront difficulties in collaborating with the VET sector. They lack detailed understanding about the training and learning system and the ability to coordinate their training demand.

Conversely, RTOs are exposed to the challenges posed by the highly specialised technical skills required by the industry sectors. Responsiveness requires RTOs and trainers who are capable of responding to the industry's training needs and specific skill requirements driven by technological developments. If this responsiveness is not able to be achieved, poor quality services result which lead to dissatisfaction with RTO training delivery and subsequent lowering of demand for training services.



Mark's 4500 km new career path

CASE STUDY

MARK and his partner were two of the many workers left without a job after the Tonganah softwood sawmill at Scottsdale closed in 2008.

Unable to find alternative work in Scottsdale and after persevering and broadening his approach, Mark took a position at the Gumatj Aboriginal Corporation at Gove, 600 km east of Darwin.

Mark works closely with small groups of indigenous workers to develop their skills in timber harvesting, sawmilling and processing. The sawn timber is used to construct cyclone-proof buildings in the community with surplus timber used in a



Mark demonstrates the operation of a portable sawmill on the Gumatj Aboriginal Corporation project.

pilot furniture manufacturing operation.

The SET project supported Mark in this process through Forest

Industries Employment and Training Service (FIETS) allowing him to undertake a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment

Initially contracted by Forestry Tasmania, Mark is now employed by the Gumatj Corporation as the joint operations, training and community development manager at Gunyangara (Ski Beach) on the Drimmie Peninsula which forms part of Melville Bay on the Gove Peninsula.

Ultimately, he wants to see the ongoing production of high grade timber, flooring, decking and cladding.

"My longer term goal is to help Gunyangara and all Gumatj outstations become a self-sufficient community," he says.

Project Objectives

Project Achievements and Outcomes

Objective 1: Building Tasmanian Enterprise Capacity, Skills Advice, Options & Education

Enterprises were better equipped to manage skills development activities

Outcome 1: Enterprises gained knowledge about training and skills development

Outcome 2: An increased number of skilled workers

Outcome 3: Developed working relationships between enterprises and training and service providers

Objective 2: Workers Assistance, Careers & Pathway Development

Career opportunities were promoted and accessed

Outcome 1: Greater awareness of existing career opportunities

Outcome 2: Industry engagement with Indigenous communities

Workers who were made redundant were offered assistance

Outcome 1: Redundant workers receive additional assistance and secure employment

Objective 3: Enhancing Training & Assessment Training and assessment capacity was enhanced

Outcome 1: More workers qualified in workplace training and assessment

Outcome 2: Training providers with up-to-date technical skills and extended areas of expertise

Outcome 3: New models of training delivery and qualification programs for harvesting and haulage operators

Outcome 4: Prospective foresters



with high level technical qualifications

Objective 4: Improving Vocational Education and Training (VET) Sector & Structure System

Training materials were improved to enhance learning processes

Outcome 1: Training and assessment resources and support materials compliant to national standards

Outcome 2: Upgraded training and assessment skills for improved safety outcomes

Outcome 3: Improved licensing system

For more information about this project visit:

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