

Contract Variation with DEEWR

Item C 16.1 (Review and modify the training program for Upfront Productivity Training(UFPT).

After reading the final report regarding UFPT supplied by Techtile Consulting dated 16-8-07, it is evident that the program was, and is, widely accepted and sanctioned by the Tiling Sections of TAFE around Australia. Teachers involved with the delivery of the program were impressed by the mature aged apprentices ability to reach an acceptable level of basic tiling in a short period of time.

Other areas of the report revealed that employers were hesitant to take on mature aged apprentices for the reasons that,

- 1) The higher wages involved with mature aged apprentices during initial training.
- 2) Fitness levels of the mature aged apprentices.
- 3) Hesitation of employers to the signing on of a mature aged apprentice on higher wages for 3 to 4 year apprenticeship.
- 4) Work ethics of some mature aged apprentices were not in tune with the Tiling industry.

Also revealed in the report was that the number of mature age participants were well below the anticipated response due to the record levels of low unemployment. While the UFPT program was well canvassed and supported by members of the tiling industry, the payment of the mature age apprentices in the initial 4 weeks of training was a major drawback to potential employers.

Suggested guidelines would be the development of an onsite assessment scheme for the mature age apprentices. The assessment tool would be a mature age apprentice workbook where the work carried out by the mature age apprentice onsite would be recorded and signed off by the perspective employer. The workbook would also have a record of projects carried out at the college in the initial 4 weeks of training.

The workbook would assist both the employer and the teachers tracking the progress made by each apprentice.

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Additionally, teachers from the training organisation should/could be permitted to call onsite to liaise with the perspective employer and assist with the onsite training and assessment.

Also included in these guidelines for pre-employment work experience would be that while the mature age apprentices were in the initial 4 weeks of training, their wages be covered by industry and/or government, rather than the employer. The mature age apprentice would attend work experience one day per week with a selected employer at no cost to that said employer. The initial training would then be extended to 5 weeks, which would then include 5 days work experience onsite with a perspective employer.

In a situation where the mature age apprentice does not have a perspective employer he/she could undertake training at a tile warehouse or retail outlet on that 5th day of the week to gain valuable industry knowledge, which, in turn could then attract an employer.

Prior to mature aged apprentices starting the UFPT TAFE course they should be encouraged to canvas all wall and floor tilers in their local district, also retail outlets and importers with the aim of securing an employer before commencement of the course. Self-motivation shown at an early stage could hopefully obtain them an employer.

Item

C16.5 (undertake a review of mature age apprentices in the tile industry with the focus on upskilling and reskilling of mature age apprentices).

In order to define the terms upskilling and reskilling of mature age apprentices, upskilling refers to mature age apprentices (24 years and older) who have had some form of training (informal or formal) in the area of wall and floor tiling, but now need to complete that training in order to gain formal qualifications.

In relation to reskilling the term applies to mature age apprentices that have had training (informal or formal) in other trade areas other than wall and floor tiling and are wishing to reskill into tiling industry.

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In New South Wales the TAFE College at Macquarie Fields (South Western Sydney Institute) conducts a wall and floor tiling course held every Saturday to accommodate upskilling and reskilling.

The course was first introduced in 1994 and was conducted over two nights a week between 6:00PM to 9:00PM. In 1999 the course was transferred to Saturdays.

The course is highly successful, in that it offers people the opportunity to upskill and reskill while they maintain a normal income.

The length of time each participant attends the course depends on their knowledge and ability, some can complete the course within 6 months, others can be there for the full duration (3 years).

While these participants are not apprentices they are mature aged students and, on completion of the course, enter the wall and floor tiling trade as qualified tilers, helping to address the skills shortage within this industry.

Another form of recognition of prior learning is offered to mature age students (over 24 years of age) by way of the Skills Express Program where the student applies for recognition by presenting a portfolio of work they have completed in recent years (must be work completed in the previous two years or less to qualify).

The applicants are tested on their knowledge of the technical aspects of the industry, (3 hour theory test) and a 12-hour practical assessment involving many areas of the tiling trade. If the applicant (mature aged student) is successful he/she qualifies for Certificate III in Wall and Floor Tiling.

If the applicant is not successful in any area of the assessment, then gap training is arranged. Once all units of competency have been achieved the applicant can then apply to the Office of Fair Trading for their Tiling licence.

The Skills Express Program is also operating at both Newcastle and Bathurst Colleges; while the processing of recognition of prior learning is very similar between the three colleges, the format of practical assessment differs from Macquarie Fields TAFE College.

At Newcastle, the practical assessment for Skills Express is aimed at areas identified as gaps when the assessor examines the portfolio of evidence submitted by the applicant for recognition of prior learning.

At the Bathurst College of TAFE the program is called "Flexi Trade", the applicants submit their portfolios as evidence for recognition of prior learning and their practical ability is assessed at the college.

The practical assessment is a series of 5 practical tasks including steps, circular columns, curved mosaic work and floor tiling on the diagonal.

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The practical assessment can take up to 6 months depending on the individual's circumstances.

At both Newcastle and Bathurst Colleges mature aged apprentices are also able to reskill and upskill. After applicants are interviewed and their level of experience is established they are placed into the mainstream course at the appropriate entry level.

As the mature aged apprentices attend with the mainstream classes it is often found that those mature aged apprentices complete the 5-day programs in 3 or 4 days due to their experience and maturity. Presently the Wall and Floor Tiling Sections at both Newcastle and Bathurst Colleges are small in comparison to Macquarie Fields and Randwick, unfortunately there is not the teaching staff available to offer a one-on-one situation.

Mature aged apprentices in the state of Victoria are able to upskill and reskill after they have completed the enrolment procedure. Recognition of prior learning is offered and assessed and the participant is placed with the appropriate mainstream course according to his/her ability.

When there are 4 or 5 participants (mature age, reskilling or upskilling) enrolling at the same time, a separate class can be created to accommodate their training. Onsite Training and Assessing is also offered in Victoria to both mainstream and mature aged students when requested by either the employer or the apprentice. Victoria Onsite Training and Assessing program is well conducted and documented with a comprehensive paper trail for each participant.

Unlike many private training organizations that carry out onsite assessing only, the Victorian TAFE conduct training and assessing onsite in conjunction with the employer. When the more detailed tiling work is to be assessed such as curved worked and vertical mosaic, the apprentice is trained and assessed at the TAFE College with qualified Wall and Floor Tiling teachers. In its endeavour to offer every opportunity to both mature age and mainstream apprentices to achieve their qualifications, the TAFE College at Holmesglen (Wall and Floor Tiling) is open 7 days a week.

In Queensland the TAFE Colleges at Yeronga and Nambour offer the opportunity for both upskilling and reskilling by way of gap training.

The mature age participants on enrolment are offered recognition of prior learning and are given a series of challenge tests to determine the

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participant's knowledge and ability. When applying for recognition of prior learning the participant must supply evidence by way of a portfolio and references from past employers and work colleagues. Once the amount of gap training required is determined, the participant can undertake onsite assessment or attend mainstream programs at the colleges or a combination of both depending on the individual circumstances.

At the larger Yeronga TAFE College the gap training is sometimes conducted on a one-to-one basis again depending on the individual's requirements. Yeronga TAFE have a section to administer enrolments, recognition of prior learning and onsite assessment, Mr. Bill Guy (teacher wall and floor tiling) explained that this system allows one person to handle this sometimes complicated paperwork.

While the processing of the recognition of prior learning is handled in the office successfully, the onsite assessing is extremely time consuming and expensive. The co-ordination required to assess onsite is often derailed by other parties, that being other trades not completing their work to allow the tiling apprentice to be assessed onsite the following day as arranged.

The time spent by Teachers away from the colleges conducting onsite assessment can result in a backlog of that Teacher's day-by-day administration duties.

The Tafe College at Gilles Plains in South Australia addresses the recognition of prior learning, upskilling and reskilling more so as a commercial venture. The applicants submit their portfolios (including references, photos) and the assessors (Wall and Floor Tiling Teachers) identify any gap training required. The applicants (mature aged apprentices) either attend one -on -one training at the college or on site training and assessing and/or a combination of both. Depending on the amount of gap training required determines the cost to the applicant; the minimum starting price is around \$3000 to \$3500.

Information supplied by Mr. Ian Robertson (Head Teacher Wall and Floor Tiling) indicates that 5 to 7 applicants progress through the College each year using this form of recognition of prior learning.

In other states where the mature aged apprentices can be included with mainstream classes, however this situation is not available in South Australia.

The Western Australian Colleges (Swan and Bunbury) offer upskilling and reskilling where a mature aged apprentice can be placed into the mainstream course according to their recognition prior learning. The mature aged apprentice is re-indentured and is offered challenge testing

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and trade testing in order to fast track the mature aged apprentice through the remainder of his or her trade course. Where a mature aged apprentice is looking to transfer from another trade into Wall and Floor Tiling the program is called TTT (Transforming Trade Training), again, recognition of prior learning is assessed and applied to that applicant.

Onsite training and assessing is a new part of the process in Western Australia with mature aged apprentices, but at this point of time, it is only in early stages of development.

As from 2nd semester 2010 Wall and Floor Tiling Teachers in Western Australia are to either call onsite or contact each student every month to monitor students progress and will also be required to call on or contact the employer every 3 months to discuss and document each students development.

Unlike other states Canberra college of Tafe (ATC) has not had the volume of enquiries regarding the recognition of prior learning, reskilling, upskilling or trade testing. The mature aged apprentices that return at a later date to finish training already started are enrolled into the mainstream courses at the appropriate entry point. At present any tiler wishing to be trade tested submits a portfolio and references as evidence of his or her experience within the trade. The information is assessed by a Wall and Floor Tiling teacher, authors of the references are contacted by phone to verify that the information supplied is correct, but there is no actual practical testing either onsite or at the college. It appears that the format of trade testing has been set by the construction faculty of the Canberra College of TAFE without consultation of the teachers from the tiling section.

The situations where Construction Faculties set the assessment criteria without consultation of the teachers from that particular section can and does lead to under assessing. Some TAFE Institutes and Faculties appear to be setting assessments with their eye on the dollar rather than the assessments criteria set out in the National Training Packages.

Considering the Tiling section at the TAFE College in Hobart has only recently appointed a full time teacher in early 2009, their bookwork and paper trail is very professional. The

original structure put together by the managers and teachers of the Bricklaying and Plastering Section and 6.

support from other TAFE Colleges in Sydney has been instrumental in this well organized section.

Reskilling and upskilling is assessed by way of portfolio and the applicants placed into the mainstream course were appropriate.

At present trade assessing is available and conducted onsite but only very few have applied for this pathway. Onsite assessing for apprentices is available but at this point in time it only applies to a student living at Burnie in the north of the island.

As in other states, recognition of prior learning is offered when apprentices, both new and matured are enrolling.

Information supplied by private training organizations explains that they do offer onsite trade assessments for mature aged apprentices wishing to gain qualifications. The applicants submit a portfolio of evidence and references and some onsite assessing is carried out. In situations where gap training is required, The Master Builders Association of NSW directs the applicant to Randwick College of TAFE to complete the gap training required before a certificate III in Wall and Floor Tiling is awarded.

As the MBA and Comet Training do not run mainstream courses for wall and floor tiling, inquiries relating to reskilling and upskilling are directed to the TAFE Colleges.

The volume of trade assessing varies, with the MBA conducting between 8 and 10 applicants per month and the Comet organization assessing 6 and 9 applicants per year.

While conducting research relating to recognition of prior learning of mature age tiling apprentices, it has become clear that many TAFE Colleges around the Nation do offer this pathway in one form or another.

To align with the National Training Qualification CPC31308 it is mandatory to offer all enrolling students the opportunity to apply for recognition of prior learning. This has become normal procedure and today many school students have completed subjects in relation to the construction industry while attending years 9, 10, 11 and 12 apply for recognition of prior learning when enrolling.

While the recognition of the national common units completed in high schools are an asset to the national training program, some so called common units unfortunately need to be more trade specific. Once apprentices enrol in their chosen trade area some common units need to be re-addressed. In regards to mature age students, many attend the wall and floor tiling courses offered around the nation where they are skills tested and placed in the course according to their prior experience and recognition of other

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qualifications they may have acquired. This allows for the fast-tracking, up-skilling and re-skilling of many mature age students.

Recognition of prior learning has also included onsite assessment, which is conducted in most all states. While this form of recognition is in some cases encouraged and directed by different Institutes and Faculties, it is extremely expensive for an applicant, and time consuming for the assessor. Unless the assessor can actually see the applicant completing the tiling, rather than the applicant saying "I tiled the steps yesterday", the onsite visit could be deemed invalid. Recognition of prior learning is certainly beneficial to the applicant and the industry, but it is open to misuse and false claims and therefore needs to be investigated thoroughly.

The process of checking information supplied in portfolios, references and onsite inspections is extremely expensive and time consuming and takes the assessor/teacher away from the classroom.

The general consensus from all states confirms onsite assessing has its major problems.

1. The coordination of appointments to assess an applicant attempting a unit of competency at a specific time and day.
2. The time needed to be spent on site to assess one unit of competency could be between ½ an hour to 3 hours.
3. Distance between one appointment to the next appointment especially in country areas.
4. If the onsite assessment is a fail, who pays for the material?
5. How credible is an assessment when the assessor has no training or expertise in a particular trade area?
6. When is an applicant assessed on specialist areas such as swimming pools, vertical mosaics and advanced curved work when they do not come in contact with this area of the trade?

The guidelines for the assessment of recognition of prior learning for mature aged tiling apprentices are well established across the nation through the TAFE colleges in all states.

While some forms of paperwork vary from college to college the templates are almost identical giving unit mapping continuity across the nation. This has been made possible over the past 4 years by the attendance of teachers representing their colleges from all states at the Australian Tile Council Annual General meetings. 8.

The TAFE Teachers meet the day preceding the Tile Council's AGM to address items arising from the National Training Packages, review assessment criteria, develop and share new teaching resources compiled from around the nation's colleges. The following day the teachers attend the Tile Council's AGM, where they have the opportunity to gather the latest industry news from Australia and around the world and relay that information back to their colleges.

The attendance of teachers at the Australian Tile Council's Annual General Meetings has been made possible by funding from the Australian Tile Council and individual colleges sharing the cost of flights and accommodation.

This action has resulted in the sharing of resources and material from all states of Australia, which, in turn, has made the National Training Package, a much more aligned document in all states. The sharing and blending of resources has also reduced the "re-inventing the wheel factor".

Further guidelines would be for the TAFE Teachers to meet on a 6 monthly basis to assist in the closer alignment of resources and assessment across the nation.

The importance of the TAFE Teachers attending the Australian Tile Council Annual Meeting would still be the major priority and the attendance of representation from the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations would be beneficial to all concerned.

Only then a successful National Licence could be introduced for the Wall and Floor Tiling Industry.

Yours truly,

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