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4 June 2012

Tim Watling  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Watling

**Re: Response to question on notice**

On 7 May 2012, Consulting Surveyors National (CSN) gave evidence at the Canberra hearing for the Standing Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations inquiry into the shortage of engineering and related employment skills.

During the hearing, the Committee Chair referred to recommendation 2 of the Consulting Surveyors National submission to the inquiry. The recommendation is to provide assistance to expand to a national level the successful "Surveying – A Life Without Limits" promotion initiated by the Surveying Taskforce in Victoria. The Chair asked for enrolment figures for universities teaching surveying courses following promotional activities to demonstrate the improvement in course up take due to the promotions. We therefore provide figures from RMIT University, Victoria and Curtin University, WA in Attachment 1.

The Victorian Taskforce was established and has continued to be financed through contributions from industry stakeholders. Since 2007 when the Taskforce was incorporated and marketing activities began in earnest, there has been a consistent increase in the numbers enrolling in the surveying degree compared to geospatial sciences which have remained relatively stable. Similarly in WA the promotion of careers by the mining industry saw an increase of students enrolling in that degree while Bachelor of Surveying numbers continue to fall. However unlike the mining industry, surveying industry numbers are small and continued access to financial contributions to maintain Taskforce activities is difficult.

What is particularly worrying is that although the percentages of students enrolling in surveying courses can be seen to be improving following marketing and promotional activities, the actual numbers of surveying graduates is still very low. With retention rates estimated between 60-80% a fig of 250 surveying graduates per year nationally, is realistic. This level of graduation barely keeps up with improving surveying registration numbers and for the profession solely responsible for the generation of all land titles, this situation is not sustainable for a growing economy. The surveying industry, similar to the engineering industry, has an ageing population with the majority of participants in the 50+ age group. With such small numbers graduating from the various universities, there are serious consequences predicted for national development if these conditions are permitted to continue.

In a 2010 skills gap study conducted for Roads Australia, BIS Shrapnel calculated that there were approximately 11,310 surveyors and cartographers nationally. This figure indicates that for each of the estimated 2,800 licensed or registered surveyors nationally, there are four non licensed surveyors by extrapolation of the BIS Shrapnel figures. It is suspected that a more likely ratio of 2.5:1 non licensed surveyors is operating in the commercial sector for every licensed surveyor. Such logic further suggests that with 2,300 surveyors in the public sector, around 2,000 surveyors are dedicated to the mining and construction industries. These participation totals are very small given the vital role that surveyors play in the nation's Torrens Titling system

***SURVEYORS vital to Australia's Development***

and the influence they have on the country's infrastructure. Valuing the infrastructure generated each year at a considerably conservative 1% of GDP, this equates to \$10 million for every surveyor. This is a significant contribution to national wealth.

The small numbers of surveyors in the industry also contribute to other difficulties and generally result in the surveying profession falling below the public radar. Such difficulties make it unlikely that the voice of so few can be heard in comparison with the construction industry where massive numbers of workers are employed. However the flow on effect of this small number of surveyors given the enormous benefit that this small industry contributes to national growth and development and the time taken to educate each surveyor, spending by the government on our four recommendations is minor in comparison to the potential economic and social loss that could result should the Torrens Titling system fall into disrepair.

With reference to our first recommendation which asked for assistance with an industry skills demand study, the Chair suggested that we should begin dialogue with the relevant Skills Council. We highlight that the Skills Councils only focus on the VET sector and therefore cannot contribute fully to our recommendation. On further investigation CSN contacted the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) however any work undertaken by the Centre demands fees that are not very different to those of a survey conducted by a respected group such as BIS Shrapnel and would only provide part of the information that is required to fully understand the tertiary sector requirements to develop skills in this industry.

Consulting Surveyors National further proposes that the skills shortage has the potential to manifest itself as a reduction in construction and engineering activity as competition for surveying services escalates. CSN continues to highlight these warnings because as our submission states, before a school can be built, a surveyor establishes the current site conditions and defines the site boundary. Before a road can be constructed, a surveyor provides the boundaries of the construction. Before a tunnel is constructed, a surveyor will determine the position and alignment required. Before the challenges of rebuilding after an earthquake or a flood or a bushfire, a surveyor will determine the limits of the Cadastre which is the register of all property boundaries and land ownership guaranteed by governments in Australia. Without surveyors, national development eventually stops.

CSN understands that clear guidelines will be needed to ensure that a National Taskforce and surveying skills demand study achieve value for money outcomes. CSN would welcome an opportunity to work with the Government to develop guidelines and further explore the options presented in this letter.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Veronica Bondarew, CEO, on (02) 9267 9728 or at [veronica.bondarew@acsnsw.com.au](mailto:veronica.bondarew@acsnsw.com.au).

Your sincerely



Phil Dingeldei  
CSN Chairman

## ATTACHMENT 1

### COMMENCING STUDENTS – RMIT

COURSE	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Surveying	24	26	28	42	36	49
Geospatial science	18	16	27	23	21	21

RMIT surveyed their students in year 1 and year 4 to estimate if there had been any growing impact from the A Life Without Limits program. The figures are as follows;

Influence on Students to take up surveying as a career/course of study in first year		Influence on Students to take up surveying as a career/course of study in fourth year	
A Life Without Limits website	57 %	A Life Without Limits website	20%
A Life Without Limits DVD	29%	A Life Without Limits DVD	7%
Surveying Taskforce at career events	29%	Surveying Taskforce at career events	10%
Geospatial revolution project	-	Geospatial revolution project	3%
None of these	38%	None of these	63%

It is interesting to note that marketing activities began with the Victorian Taskforce – A Life Without Limits in 2007. Since then there has been a steady increase in the uptake of a surveying degree. The effectiveness of the promotional marketing is also evident in the difference in responses from students in fourth year who commenced their degrees in 2007 compared to those students who commenced their degrees in 2011.

### COMMENCING STUDENTS BACHELOR OF SURVEYING – CURTIN UNIVERSITY

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Surveying	69	50	43	40	36

### COMMENCING STUDENTS MINE & ENGINEERING SURVEYING STUDENTS – CURTIN UNIVERSITY

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
M&E surveying	7	16	18	26	28

The numbers of surveying students in WA continues to decline. Following a mining promotion for jobs in the industry, an increase of 400% was demonstrated in M&E surveying enrolments.

### REGISTRATIONS/LICENCES ISSUED IN EACH JURISDICTION

State	2010	2011
Queensland	572	579
Victoria	516	521
ACT	68	68
NSW	973	1067
Tasmania	72	111
South Australia	144	171
Western Australia	247	258
Northern Territory	78	77
Total	2,670	2,852

Source: CRSBANZ