

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2003-2004 BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 2
Output Group: 2.1

DEST Question No. E178_04

Senator Carr asked on 4 June 2003, EWRE Hansard page 403

Question:

I understand that the ANTA Board has recommended 10 Industry Skills Councils. How many representations have you had complaining about this arrangement?

Answer:

Industry Skills Councils

ANTA has provided the following response:

The ANTA Board proposed streamlining and revising the role and responsibilities for national industry advisory arrangements in late 2002. The initial proposition put forward for consultation was formation of eight new Industry Skills Councils with two roles:

- actively support the development, implementation and continuous improvement of high quality, nationally recognised training products (currently Training Packages) and services, including enhancing innovation, rationalising materials where there are cross-industry synergies, and improving efficiency; and
- assist industries, enterprises and their workforce to integrate skill development with business goals and support accurate industry intelligence on future directions - including provision of strategic advice on industry skills and training needs to the National Industry Skills Forum (NISF).

After wide consultation with peak bodies, governments and chairs and other representatives of existing advisory bodies the Board determined in April 2003 to declare and fund ten Industry Skills Councils. Five are scheduled to be declared by mid 2003 based on acceptable proposals for new Councils put forward by consortia of existing stakeholders and another five to be declared by the end of 2003 as negotiations between players mature into viable propositions.

Both the ACTU and ACCI have informed ANTA that some proposed Councils in the second five to be declared should be allowed to form over a more extended period from interim declared Councils. This would effectively mean up to 13 Councils being initially declared with a reduction to ten over a longer timeframe and the Board has considered this advice. A number of existing advisory bodies or some sector stakeholders represented on them have also written to ANTA and Ministers arguing for stand-alone status as a Skills Council in addition to the 10 the Board has agreed to declare and fund, or proposing different groupings that would again increase the overall number of Councils.

In total the two peak industry bodies noted above have put forward Council structures different to the ten proposed by the ANTA Board; four of the existing twenty-nine national industry advisory bodies have formally taken a position of wanting to stand outside of the Board determined Councils although this is not a criticism of the number of Councils per se but rather of their proposed composition. Correspondence from approximately twelve

industry sector representatives of employer or employee associations connected with a particular industry have written to ANTA requesting consideration of different representation within the eventual Council structure. Again this has not included a discrete criticism of the total number of Councils as set out by the Board but the make-up of a particular Council.

In summary although there has been inevitable lobbying to retain current arrangements in some quarters post the Board's decision, there has been little or no criticism of the principle of moving to a smaller number of bodies comprising national industry advisory arrangements. Negotiations are still ongoing and all positions put forward from stakeholders are fully considered by the ANTA Board and a formal response made in each case.