

From: [Gay Thompson](#)
To: [DIIS.CITFActReview](#)
Subject: CITB Review Submission
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I was previously Presiding Member of the Construction Industry Training Board until being asked to resign by Minister Pisoni. The board worked harmoniously and effectively until the appointment by Minister Pisoni of a member who had a tenuous connection to the industry and a close connection to the minister. This was obvious from the provocative nature of statements he made and resolutions he proposed and by his obvious reporting back to the minister. This was very destructive.

I consider the board, as previously constructed and operating, was an enhancement to the construction industry. The fact that it resulted from extensive lobbying by employee and employer organisations set it up for success. In my opinion the 2019 amendments were without substance and could not produce a board as committed to the industry as the previous boards. Structurally the latest board was set up to allow the interests of individual groups or companies to dominate. The lack of inherent balance, even among employer organisations, means that in time they would lead to disruption and disharmony in the industry. The risk of an organisation using funds to its own benefit is inherent. This could occur through one organisation or company receiving a disproportionate share of funds to deliver services.

My responses to some of the propositions follows. I am not in a position to comment on all propositions. In general I consider the tone of the issues paper to be constructive and helpful and reflects many of my views and observations.

A1. No knowledge although I was alarmed at the cessation of funding to Mates in Construction and the cessation of the field officers. Employment of the field officers had been comprehensively evaluated. The increase in scope of apprentices supported was clear in the figures. The positive feedback from employers and apprentices alike received at industry gatherings indicated their value to the sector. Their employment recognised that employment obligations are not always well understood when small firms set up in the construction industry. Making paper work easier for small employers and helping them deal with it, is a clear enhancement of productivity. I am not aware of the reasons given for ceasing this project.

In terms of the proposition under A1, I agree the purpose should be clearly set out. I suggest this include an obligation relating to research and the use of information collected by the board to be analysed and promulgated in a way that is valuable to the industry. This was commenced in my term as Presiding Member. This was initiated following the Board's visit to Queensland where this has been a long term and apparently much valued, practice.

A2. Agree with propositions 2-10. No opinion on 11&12. Neither of these was an issue during the period of my involvement.

B2. I agree with propositions 13-15.

An additional issue to be considered here is the responsibility of Commonwealth projects to contribute to the fund. While constitutionally it is not possible to require this, in an era of Commonwealth projects the exemption of the Commonwealth effectively results in the other sectors subsidising expertise used on Commonwealth projects. This has been a major issue in the Australian Capital Territory. My understanding was that an informal agreement was developed in this jurisdiction such that project owners made a voluntary contribution to the fund. This had also been the practice in South Australia. From press reports I understand that the last manifestation of the board noted such a payment in relation to a project, my recollection is it related to a naval project. The media coverage indicated that the earlier board was accused of accepting an illegal payment and the funds were returned. In fact, the Board had historical Crown Law advice that such payments were legal. Instead I believe the accusation to be part of a political scheme to undermine the previous board and also reflected the lack of broad expertise on the recent board.

B3. No comment re 16 and 17.
Agree with 18 and 19

B1. No comment re 20-23.

- B4 Strongly agree with 24 hence my earlier comments about the value of the field officers and research.
No comment re 25
- C. Strongly agree with 26 and 27
- D1&2. Agree with 28 and 29
- E. No knowledge of other systems.

Further comments

The issue of adult apprenticeships needs to be addressed especially in times of major disruption in the employment market. The demolition of the car industry is an example of a time when the board needed flexibility to work with government and partners in other industries to develop schemes targeted at and maximising opportunities for, differently skilled workers to transfer their skills to the construction industry without suffering the disadvantage of long periods of minimal income.

As the need for workers to retrain becomes more incorporated in the workforce there needs to be greater concentration on adult apprenticeships. Adult apprenticeships can also be important in addressing inequities and imbalances in the construction industry. More support is needed to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the construction industry. Given the over representation of ATSI people in the judicial system opportunities should be sought to provide pre employment programs for this group as part of efforts to reduce recidivism. This has previously happened at Pt Augusta prison independent of CITB. I consider the industry involvement and expertise possible through the skills of previous staff at CITB (most resigned or were terminated under the 2019 board), would enhance such projects.

Similarly the construction industry offers opportunities for refugees.

And it is often easier for mature age women to enter the construction industry than it is for school leaving girls.

The Act should provide for social justice programs such as these to receive special consideration including in receiving grants from government for these purposes.

I am happy to expand on my experiences and views in a meeting with the reviewers. I can be contacted by email and at [REDACTED] Please note I will be absent from [REDACTED] I will be in [REDACTED] for much of that time so not contactable.

Thank you for your work in reviewing the Act. Your consideration of the issues seems very comprehensive.

Gay Thompson
Sent from my iPad