No more excuses....
where to from here?

National WELL Practitioners Conference
Sydney – 17th November 2011
Bob Paton – CEO Manufacturing Skills Australia
“NO MORE EXCUSES 
an industry response to the language, literacy 
and numeracy challenge”

- report released by Australia’s Industry Skills 
  Councils on 1st September 2011
- highlighting the continuing LL&N problems facing 
  millions of people in our workforce
  - 53% of working age Australians have difficulty with numeracy
  - 46% have difficulty with reading skills
  - 13% are classified in the lowest literacy category
- asserting that building LL&N skills should be shared by industry and all education sectors
Why is it now a (greater) problem?

- inadequately prepared workforce entrants
- the challenges of an ageing workforce
- increasing workplace compliance requirements
- increasing workplace performance requirements
- demand for higher level skills
- ~ 40% of our workforce does not hold a post-school qualification
- despite all efforts over the last 20 years....... 
- increasing reliance on sound LL&N
Was it ever a problem back when?

There is undeniable evidence to demonstrate that poor communication skills adversely affect productivity in the workplace...productivity suffers as does our global competitiveness.

*The Hon John Dawkins MP 1990*

The levels and types of English language and literacy required in modern Australian society have increased dramatically. Economic restructuring has placed heavy demands on skills, and on education and training programs to develop those skills. English language and literacy is fundamental to the whole of the education and training effort.

*All Commonwealth Ministers for Education and Training 1993*
Was it a problem fairly recently?

We are living in a time of skills shortages arising from demographic and technological change and the proportion of jobs requiring vocational education and training qualifications is expected to significantly increase in the future, yet the capacity of many individuals to re-skill and up-skill in constrained by poor LLN.

Julia Gillard, Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2008

Literacy and numeracy shortfalls have emerged as a major issue for employers as they evaluate their skills base against opportunities presented by the improving economy... more than 75% of employers responding to our survey reported that their businesses were affected by low levels of literacy and numeracy.

Heather Ridout, Chief Executive, Australian Industry Group 2010
Was it a problem last year?

Language, literacy and numeracy skills are now recognised as fundamental to improve workforce participation, productivity and social inclusion.

Skills Australia 2010

The importance of foundation skills such a literacy, language and numeracy cannot be overstated. Poor foundation skills can be a major barrier for job seekers and for those wishing to up-skill. These core skills are crucial to higher educational outcomes – which in turn lead to higher workforce participation and higher productivity.

Australian Government Budget 2010-2011
What can be done about it for learners?

- influence schools programs for increased development of applied LL&N
- improve the identification and description of LL&N requirements in VET units of competency and qualifications
- provide greater opportunities for support to learners in need
- upskill the VET workforce in order to identify learners’ LL&N needs
- upskill the VET workforce in adequate pedagogy to address identified LL&N needs
What can be done about it for existing workers?

- expand capability of programs to better address workplace LL&N
- embrace LL&N as a mainstream issue in workforce development
- focus on applied LL&N as enabling, context-sensitive skills that can be demonstrated over a continuum from basic to advanced practices
- overcome any stigma through empathetic means
- promote the benefits – for the individual and certainly for the enterprise – look across the whole enterprise
What are key considerations for existing workers?

- don’t label, stigmatise or isolate
- deal with LL&N in context, as enabling skills
- deal with LL&N as specified or required by the learning outcomes and assessment requirements
- ‘teach them how to fish’
Developments in Training Packages

- Foundation Skills Training Package under development – including support resources
- mapping the Australian Core Skills Framework to units of competency and qualifications
- improved identification of ‘Foundation Skills’ in units of competency
Mapping the Australian Core Skills Framework to units and quals

- DEEWR-funded work by each ISC to undertake work over the next 2 years (at least)
- different approaches and methodologies
- final specification or info in TPs to be determined
- outcomes will not be viewed as a pre-requisite but will be in keeping with an outcomes approach
- will inform unit/qualification development and review
Improved identification of ‘Foundation Skills’ in units

- arose from the VET Products for the 21st Century report
- each unit of competency will have an entry about ‘Foundation Skills’
- definition of ‘Foundation Skills’ and how they will be expressed is yet to be finalised
- work will be carried out as ISCs ‘streamline’ all TP units of competency and qualifications over the next few years
Foundation Skills TP support resources

- DEEWR-funded work by each ISC to undertake work over the next year
- aimed at assisting implementation of the TP
- different approaches and products
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