# EMBEDDING RPL IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICE: LEARNING FROM DOWNUNDER

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# Summary

Brief overview of RPL in Australian context

**COAG RPL Initiative**

- *HRM/Workforce development*
- *Industry partnerships*
- *Group RPL*
- *Standout Models (volunteers/indigenous)*

**RPL & Skilled Migrant Research**

- *Skills Recognition Australian Rail industry*
- *Skilled Migrant Engineers & Engineers Australia*

# Background

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) was introduced into Australia as part of a National Qualifications Framework in **1993.**

**VET**

- It is part of the Australian Quality Framework (AQF) charter and the standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) delivering accredited training. Within these charters and standards it is mandatory for RPL to be offered to all applicants on enrolment.
- RPL is now part of a Credit Transfer Framework

**Higher Edn**

- In 1993 the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee gave RPL in-principle support.
- By 2000, at least 11 of a possible 38 Australian universities – had formalised their position on RPL in writing. Many more institutions accepted RPL, even in the absence of a written policy.

# RPL Downunder: Higher Edn

## Pitman (2009:237-8)

*This study found significant evidence that the profile of RPL in Australian universities is increasing insofar as it can be measured in formal policy positions and documents, including their online accessibility. Most universities continue to provide a 'blanket' policy on the recognition of prior learning and do not provide a separate document specific to RPL. However, more than three-quarters of Australian universities now indicate that they accept RPL and, of those, 90% provide a publicly available document outlining their institutional policies, processes and guidelines on RPL. More than half of the policies deal with RPL either exclusively or in a significant manner, including precise definitions, institutional aims and guidelines on how informal learning should be measured. Many institutions' policy documents remain weighted towards credit transfer....*

*efforts to improve linkages between the TAFE and higher education sectors, whilst focusing on credit transfer, have arguably highlighted the need for universities to do more to recognise informal learning directly*
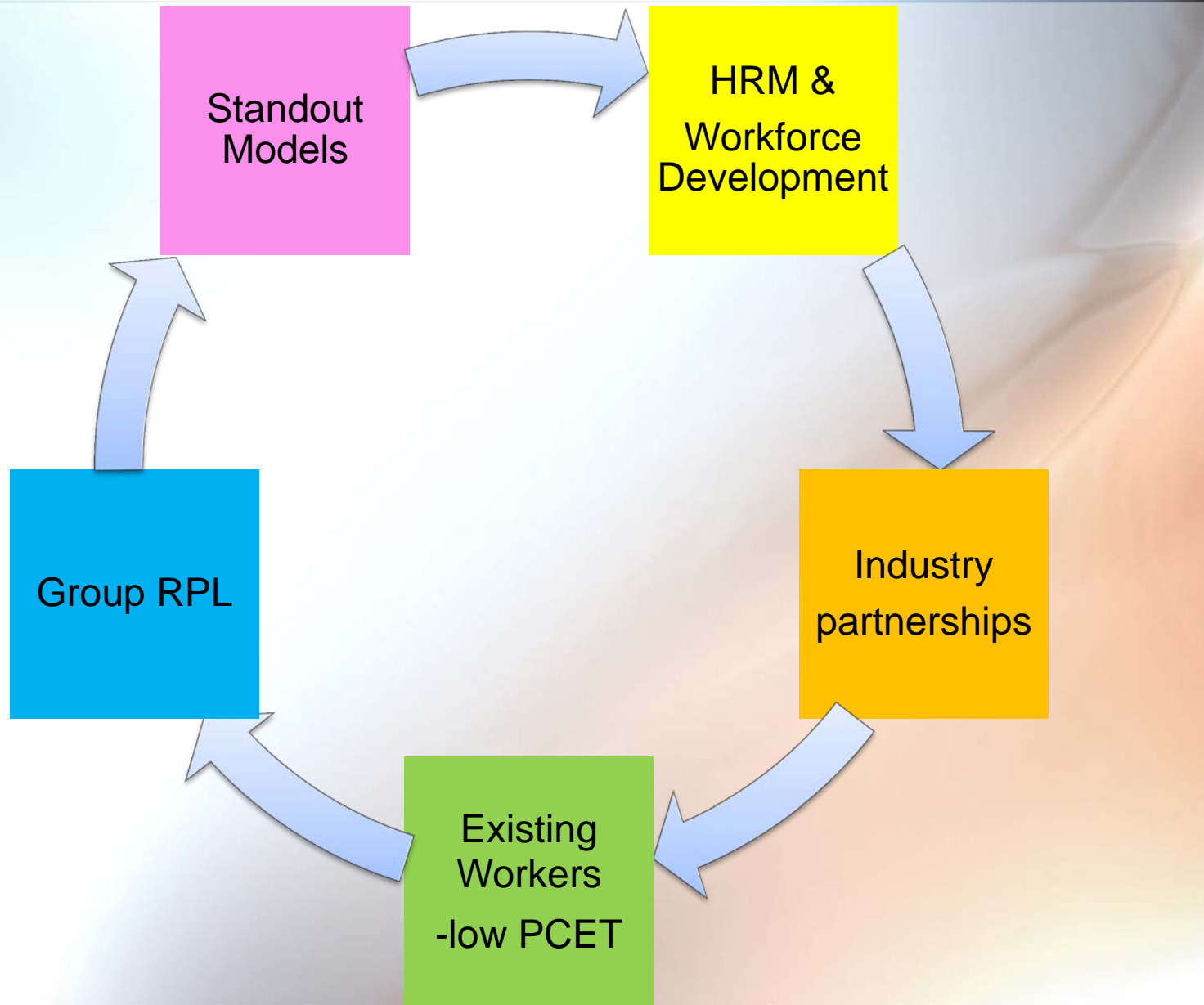
# COAG RPL INITIATIVE 2006-2009

**Council Of Australian Governments**

**Est 1992 - Chaired by Prime Minister**

**Federal, Six State and Territories &**

**Australian Local Government Association**

- *Co-ordinates government activities between the federal and state or territorial governments and between the state and territorial governments themselves as well as issues affecting local government.*

# COAG Examples



Standout Models → HRM & Workforce Development → Industry partnerships → Existing Workers -low PCET → Group RPL → Standout Models

# COAG Examples

## HRM/Workforce Development

- **ERTOA & Boral**
- **Regional perspective**
- **O-I Glass**
- **Qantas**
- **Retrenched Mitsubishi workers**

## Strong Industry Partnerships

- **Automotive Industry**
- **Construction Industry**

# COAG Examples

**Existing workers Low PCET**

- **Bricklayers**
- **HunterNET-manufacturing**

**Group RPL Models**

- **Ageing & Disability workers**
- **Early Childhood workers**
- **Local Government employees**
- **Mental Health Sector-**

**Skills Recognition**
valuing prior learning

# Standout Models



NSW Rural Fire Service



Indigenous Artist & Musicians



Volunteers P & C Association

# HRM/ Workforce Development

## Enterprise RTO Assoc (EROTA) & Boral

**Partnership:** EROTA & Boral

Skills recognition model maximises opportunities for collection of training data & evidence through normal business processes.

**BENEFITS FOR BUSINESS:**
Assisted with attraction and retention, improved morale and gives more rigor to HRM processes



## BORAL Emu Plains quarry

Workers long term, mature aged with extensive quarry experience.

HRM processes as sources of evidence for RPL:

- Recruitment
- Induction
- Customised training
- Worker supervision
- Performance management

Leveraging of evidence collected in normal business processes (listed above) to contribute to evidence for RPL for *Certificate II in Extractive Industries Operations.*

30 certificates awarded over a 2 year period at Emu Plains site, Boral plans to roll this integrated recognition process out across other sites.

# HRM/ Workforce Development

## O-I Glass

**O-I is an international company –** the largest manufacturer of glass containers in the world. It has 4 plants in Australia.

**O-I Penrith plant:** 360 employees and is one of the largest private sector employers in the area.

**Skills recognition:** foundation of the O-I approach to achieving nationally recognised qualifications for its employees, building on their prior training, especially in Six Sigma and Lean Manufacturing.

**Implemented Six Sigma as a corporate strategy some years ago and is part of the Lean Manufacturing disciplines.** In order to further embed the Lean and Six Sigma culture at O-I's Penrith plant the organisation has adopted a systematic approach to staff training which has linked business improvement strategies to a national qualification for employees.

**Partnership:** Western Sydney Institute of TAFE. Appointed a case manager- training needs analysis

**Skills Recognition formed foundation of the approach and provided many advantages.**

1. **Allowed the Training Manager, to sell the skills development program to employees because it did not duplicate existing training and, at the same time, was cost effective for the company.**
2. **It gave a clear foundation for building further skills and taking individuals and the company to the next level of training and skills.**
3. **Allowed employees to be acknowledged for their skills and the company to publicly celebrate the achievements of its staff.**

The Skills Recognition program - based on development of a training plan for each participant. Evidence gathered by assessors, as well as assessors observing employees performing tasks in the workplace. Where skills gaps were identified training was organised and took place in the workplace.

Support work-based training and assessment, the company has developed in-house workplace assessors. The company currently has 50 workplace assessors amongst its staff, 11 per shift.



5S Sustain – Activity Board
5S Standardise
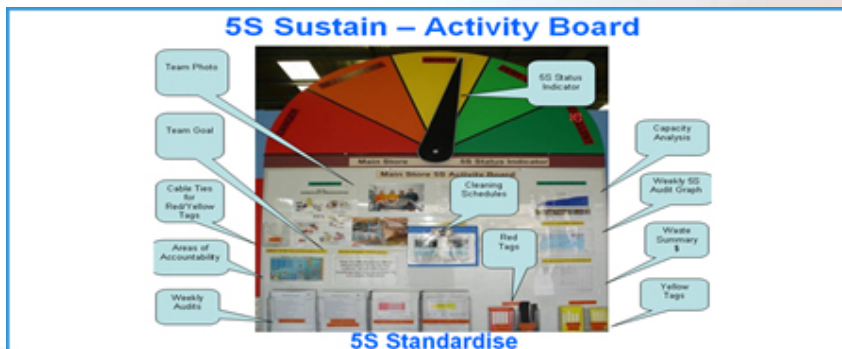
# Corporate benefit linked to recognition & training

**Key to the success of the recognition and training program:**

- Directly linked to shop floor application of Lean Six Sigma approaches to business improvement.
- Ensures that participants in recognition programs can provide valid evidence with a high level of transparency.
- Individual opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications can be demonstrated to have sustainable benefits for the company.
- Requires management involvement and commitment to Lean Manufacturing principles and techniques.

## ROI & Learning Culture

The company is able to demonstrate the effectiveness of its training program with measurable improvements on a number of performance measures:

- including lost time injuries,
- medical treatment injuries,
- first aid injuries,
- production profile,
- quality (quarantine for non-conforming product), and
- down-time for equipment.

On all these measures, there has been marked improvement since the commencement of a comprehensive training program.

The skills recognition program has led to a strong sense of achievement and a culture of learning, and employees feel that their skills are acknowledged and celebrated. The culture of learning means that the company is always looking to new learning opportunities for the future.

# Regional based approach

**Sharing Workers Locally –**
**Model for Regions**

Collaborative approach by businesses, training providers and community leaders in north-west NSW.

**Goal:** keeping existing workers and young people in the region through innovative approaches to jobs creation and training.

Jobs Summit, Narrabri: 90 business and community leaders gathered to look at innovative ways to tackle attraction and retention skilled workers.

A multi-pronged approach coordinated by Local Government:

• Focus on providing job security

• Addressing the seasonal labour requirements of local businesses

• Providing cross-industry training and **skills recognition.**

*AgriFoods Career Access Pathway students Yrs 9 & 10*

*Increased students in Childcare- identified retention issue for business/ professionals*



**Key challenge**: providing continuity of employment where most regional employment (agriculture, mining etc) seasonal

**Narrabri Council** to take on the role of coordinating the placement of skilled workers to local industry on a cost recovery basis. The workers are employed by Council, giving them the security of continuous employment. During seasonal employment lows, workers participate in training and become part of Council's workforce.

This approach, underpinned by research which showed that a **Skills Demand Calendar** could be developed drawing on local knowledge. The Calendar identifies both **seasonal labour demand** and **common skills sets** required across industries. Once the peak demand is plotted on a timeline, businesses can schedule work to take advantage of the skills sets available in the local labour market.

# HRM/ Workforce Development

## Qantas re-skilling staff

Staged introduction of new fleet of A380 Airbus aircraft based in Sydney.

Environment rapid change

**Solving 2 problems with 1 strategy:**

Urgent need for Aircraft Maintenance Engineers for new A380 aircraft, previous retrenchment round, no new apprentices for last 2 years & external recruitment program largely unsuccessful.

Large group of staff been with Qantas 20 yrs facing redundancy. Previously trained in aspects of mechanical trades and internal training in aircraft workshop but no AME qualifications.

Operations: Reduced workshop based maintenance approaches.

**Partnership:** Qantas and SW Sydney Institute to implement re-skilling project existing staff who otherwise would be retrenched.

Re-skilling in aircraft maintenance- combined skills recognition and customised gap training.

1st Step: supported self assessment – customised online training

2nd step: F2F **RPL interviews**

106 staff individualised & unique training programs –

**RPL** and identify skill gaps training

CEO Manufacturing Skills Australia-

nominated this project outstanding example

of innovative training program.

# HRM/ Workforce Development

## Retrenched Workers-SA

700 workers retrenched Mitsubishi closed its SA plant in 2008

**Partnership** - Mitsubishi, the State and Commonwealth Governments and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU).

Extensive transition project for displaced workers.

**Case Management Model**

Case management covering **skills recognition** and **gap training**, as well as **career counselling and employment brokerage.**

Although many of the displaced workers **had little or no formal qualifications,** through **mentoring, assessment and some further training** they were able to approach new employers with a package that documented their skills and identified jobs for which they were qualified.

6 months into the program 500 of the 700 workers had found new jobs.

# Existing Workers: RPL for Bricklayers

55% of bricklayers are unqualified (ABS 2006).

Only qualified and licensed tradespeople are able to take on apprentices.

High level of unqualified bricklayers contributes to an on-going problem of **skills shortages** in this trade.

FCTA (Flexible Construction and Training and Assessment) a small family-based RTO in South Australia with a passionate about dealing with this problem through its **flexible RPL services**

Most unqualified workers in bricklaying, tiling and related trowel trades entered the workforce through a family business and learnt their skills on the job. This is particularly common in **migrant families**. Most participants **35 – 45 age** group and are impeded in their careers by their lack of qualification, as they are unable to work as contractors in their own right or to employ apprentices.

*Successful candidates :*

- *Feel more respected and accepted in the industry*

- *Important career shift- use their qualification to become licensed, to start their own small business and take on apprentices*



*FCTA Flexible RPL Services:*

*The main reason they have not taken up the opportunity to gain recognition for their skills previously is that the mainstream RPL programs require five weeks of attendance at a college, which as sole traders they cannot afford. FCTA has overcome this problem by offering their program at times and locations chosen by the participant. FCTA assessors and trainers visit the participants in their workplace to observe skills and conduct interviews and gap training after hours, or at the participants own home.*

# Existing Workers:
# RPL for Manufacturing

**48% manufacturing workers have no formal qualification**

**Manufacturing Skills Australia (MSA) promote RPL Models that use the language of the workplace, strong learner support mechanisms plus rigorous evidence-based approaches**

**HunterNet: coop innovative manufacturers, engineers, IT providers, electrical & consultative companies Hunter Valley**

**Initial self assessment: workplace interview**
*Built confidence and often uncovered hidden skills*

**Development user friendly tools-concise and brief**
**Evidence: photographs, videos, voice recordings & workplace documents**

# Strong industry partnerships

## Automotive Industry

**Priority due to skill shortages**

**National Steering Group:**

Institute of Automotive Engineers, Automotive Training Board, Insurance Group Australia, Bosch, Motor Trades Assoc, Australian Manufacturing Workers Union, GM Holden, Toyota, Private RTOs, TAFE, DET NSW and Office Fair Trading

**RPL Kit Automotive Industry**

Cert III & Frontline Mngt levels

Focused on work based learning and industry requirements

Piloted at 30 locations nationally

**Future:**

Automotive Industry Mentoring Project to help further embed the RPL process as a primary management and workforce development tool

Cert IV and Diploma level qualifications

## Construction

**Skills Express Construction Industry Partnership Project (SCIP)**

**Partnership:** TAFE NSW, unions, employers and private RTOs

**Target:** experienced mature aged workers

Without any qualifications

1. Training Supervisors as assessors:
*Cert IV Training & Assessment*

2. Skills recognition and gap training model which is customised for *Certificate III* qualifications:

- *Concreting*
- *Dogging & Rigging*
- *Steel fixing*

On the job learning & assessment

Case management approach incl. mentoring

*3.* Online resources, tools, review process

# Group RPL: Aging & Disability

**Partnership:** Group Recognition (GR) & NSW Ageing Disability and Home Care (ADHC)

70 staff: *Certificate IV in Disability* by a recognition pathway.

*Certificate IV in Disability* is mandatory minimum qualification required by ADHC for employees working in respite and residential care.

**Target:** Team Leaders and Practice Support Coordinators had other qualifications, including degrees, but not the *Certificate IV in Disability.* ADHC wanted to ensure that their existing competent and experienced staff achieved the same qualification through recognition of their previous training and experience.

## Customised recognition strategy

**Emphasis on preparation B4 assessment**

**Survey of candidates and managers**

**Each pathway:** information session and a group recognition assessment event.

**Each candidate:** given a pathway specific guide that clearly outlined what they need to do for the assessment event.

**All assessors:** familiar with the Group Recognition assessment process.

Groups of 3-4 are used for Evidence Presentations
Groups of 6 for Directed Activities.

The evidence candidates provided was extensive, and together with the evidence provided by the organisation enabled all 70 candidates to achieve *Certificate IV in Disability.* 100% success rate.

Exemplified the underlying strength of Group Recognition as an interactive and engaging assessment process.

Organisation: cost effective recognition assessment with all candidates experiencing minimal time off the job.

Win, win experience for all stakeholders.

# Group RPL

## Early Childhood Workers

**Minimum qualification standards introduced in 2014**

**Target:** long term workers with no formal qualifications in rural and remote areas

**Group RPL** powerful tool with students with low self-confidence in educational settings:

- Facilitated group activities (clear tasks) and discussions
- Followed by rigorous questioning & skill demonstrations
- On-the-job observations

**DEEWR funded training of 600 RPL Assessors**



## Local Government

3 Models developed;
2 Group RPL Models and 1 Streamlined approach

**Group Model**: long term existing workers *Cert III in Local Govt*

**Group Model**: up-skilling existing worker trainees

**Streamlined RPL portfolio**: existing workers in horticulture & regulatory services

# Group RPL: Mental Health

**Innovative, streamlined group-based RPL for managers**

## Group RPL Model

Mental Health Coordinating Council

Skill shortages projected into the next 5-10 years

Lack of formal qualifications in management in current managers - *promoted from within and have learnt on-the-job*

Groups of 10 screened to ensure 2 yrs + management experience

Assessed during 1 day workshop- 2 facilitators

SoA - 5 Units of Competency *Adv Dip Community Sector Management*

- Mind maps
- Diversity Audit
- Audit report
- Continuous improvement register
- Project brief & evaluation strategy
- OH&S & risk management register & plan

Discuss and model cross-fertilisation of ideas & knowledge sharing

One on one discussions with facilitators

# Stand out models- Volunteers

Service Skills Australia -  Industry Skills Council for the service industries

**VOLUNTEERS:** Federation of Parents & Citizens' Association of NSW (P&C).

45,000 P & C volunteers in all cities, towns and regions of NSW.

Impressive range of skills and activities that relate to P&C involvement.

Ten major skills sets listed, the first three alone give a sense of the variety and depth of skills demonstrated by P&C volunteers:

- food handling and hospitality, through their work in the canteen and functions organised by the P&C
- purchasing, stock control, human resource management, rostering and small business management with the operation of the school canteen, uniform shop and Out of School Hours Care
- events management and organisational skills – school fetes, Mother's and Father's Day stalls, trivia nights, fashion parades, art shows and bus trips

**'Assess first, train second'**
**Equal access to RPL for those not in paid workforce**

## Discuss, Display, Do

Skills recognition process that avoids placing the burden on candidates to provide 'evidence' against units of competence. Conversation based model.

**3 Stage Model**
1. Discuss: conversation
2. Display: candidate provides documents/material
3. Do: Interactive observation

**Assessor Network:**
4  Lead Assessors
26 Regional Assessors
60 Assessor Advocates

**Target:** 100 unemployed & 50 employed volunteers in regions of high unemployment

# Stand out models- Indigenous Artists & Muscians

Innovative model of flexible assessment and training that can be used by a variety of organisations.

**TAFE NSW – New England Institute** facilitated the recognition of units from the *Certificate IV in Training and Assessment* for Aboriginal musicians and artists who were delivering workshops and performing as part of a Cultural Showcase at the Tamworth Country Music Festival.

Workshops are run each year for budding musicians and artists from all over Australia. Participants hear about the experiences of established musicians and learn how to get a head start in the industry. Practical workshops cover presentation skills, guitar, didgeridoo, Indigenous weaponry and traditional dancing and art. Those delivering the workshops are often well known musicians and artists and many are nationally and internationally recognised.

Developed tools and processes to meet RPL requirements for candidates without in-depth knowledge of technical language & terminology of VET

Schedules of observation and recording, videotaping, conversations – scribing, oral traditions



**Future:**
**Indigenous women's group organised catering: RPL & training in hospitality**

**RPL & trg in stage production & lighting, sound apparatus**

# Stand out models-Cultural & Heritage Tourism

Australia's tourism industry is a vitally important part of the economy.

**Skills shortages** in tour guiding with a particular focus on cultural heritage and the environment.

**Partnership:** National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Northern Beaches College of TAFE NSW & Northern Sydney Institute.

2 parallel projects.

**1. Aboriginal Cultural Tourism**

Developed and delivered training in tour guiding to Aboriginal communities in NSW over the past three years. This ongoing project took first place in the NSW Training Awards in 2009. The aim of this project is to support the strategic direction of Aboriginal cultural tourism in NSW and continues to gain widespread support.

**2. RPL for Existing Staff**

Potential candidates for the program were Discovery Rangers with extensive experience in the field.

Invitations to participate in an RPL program were sent to 182 staff of which there were 46 Indigenous participants. The Indigenous participants were invited to do a *Certificate I in Tourism (Australian Indigenous Culture)* as well as the *Certificate III in Tourism (Guiding)* while remaining candidates were invited to complete the *Certificate III in Tourism (Guiding).*

In total 86 candidates completed the RPL process and have been awarded qualifications.





*Through the Aboriginal Discovery program, Aboriginal people are conducting professional guided tours around parks and reserves .The guides interpret their cultural heritage, celebrating the close connections between Aboriginal people and their traditional lands.*

# Stand out models- NSW Rural Fire Service

70,000 strong membership

Over 2,100 volunteer brigades

Service is located in many remote areas and the logistics of training more and more assessors was not feasible.

In November 2009 - implemented the **RPL Assessment Advocate strategy -** aimed to have a ratio of one trained assessor to 3 assessment advocates.

By 2010 the Service already had upwards of 1000 trained assessors

RPL strategy -  collegial approach to evidence gathering.

**Assessment Advocate Model** – volunteers trained up to AQF Level 3 in Contribute to Assessment. Advocates are located in the field and work with RPL candidates to mentor and guide them in collecting and preparing evidence for assessment.

In effect, the strategy simply distributes the workload of RPL assessment via delegation. At the same time it addresses the problem of remoteness and possible burn out of existing assessors.

RPL process is very rigorous, user friendly and non-threatening. Volunteers come from all walks of life – approach needed to be flexible and sensitive.

**BENEFITS:**

It makes a difference to volunteers when they are recognised for what they do.

It changes the culture and has taken the mystery and difficulty out of RPL.

RPL process serves to strengthen the expertise and capacity of the NSW Rural Fire Service to perform the vital and often life saving tasks it is called upon to carry out.

# Skilled Migration/RPL Research



Skilled Migrant Engineers/
Rail Industry
2009-2011
$198,705.00

Skills Recognition-
Rail Industry
2010-2012
$279,632.00

Gladstone- resource
rich region
2012
$40,000.00
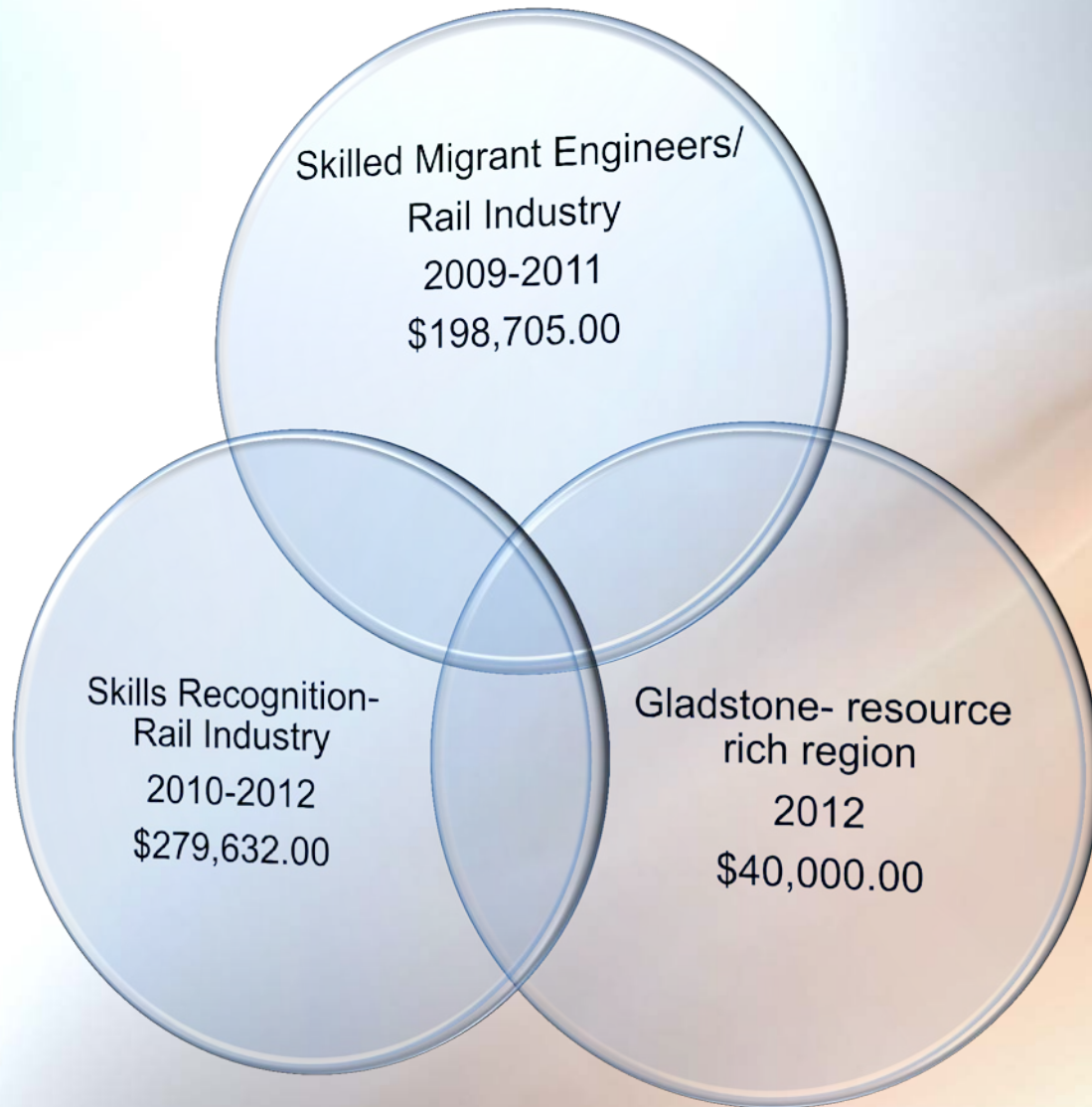
# Skilled Migrant Engineers & Rail Industry

**CRC for Rail Innovation Research Project- Skilled Migration**

- **Focus Engineering occupations**

**Rail industry:**

- **Ageing workforce, skill shortages engineering/technical jobs families**
- **Domestic competition resources sector**

**Case study (onshore skilled migrants):**

- **Engineers Australia, Victoria**

# http://www.ara.net.au/skilled_migration/home.php

# Case Study: Victorian Govt, Engineers Australia, Vic and Tribus Lingua

# Skills Recognition Framework

- **CRC for Rail Innovation Research Project- Skills Recognition Framework**
- **AIM: develop a comprehensive Skills Recognition Framework for Australian rail industry**
- **QUAL: SS Interviews, RPL recipients, RPL Assessors, HR managers, L&D managers, Operations managers, RTOs**

- **Key Challenges:**
- **Risk mitigation and  safety conscious industry**
- **Harmonisation across States & Territories**

# 6 of the 9 strategic recommendations of the ARA depend on improved SR

*Strategy 1: Position the culture of rail for the future*

> improved SR of existing employees & new employee groups (migrants, women, young people) who will change the culture of the industry.

*Strategy 3: Retain experienced staff and the knowledge they hold*

> develop a formal knowledge capture database, promote informal knowledge transfer processes as an alternative strategy to (formal) skill development.

*Strategy 4: Establish more effective migration arrangements*

> attending to SR issues for overseas workers.

*Strategy 5: Build new employment and training pathways (SR & Recruitment)*

> increasing funds for SR and improving processes for identifying, fast tracking suitable workers into engineering and trade roles where shortages are present; establish bridging skill development programs.

*Strategy 6: Introduce more flexible/innovative work practices*

> SR will be required to identify e.g. where unskilled or semi-skilled work is done highly skilled staff

*Strategy 7: Ensure a consistent industry approach to skills development*

> Common and industry supported national standards for key qualifications and occupations

# Dimensions of human resource management which link to skills recognition

| 1. Staffing: | Job analysis and redesign |
| | Attraction, branding and recruitment |
| | Selection and induction |
| | Managing turnover |
| | Encouraging diversity |
| 2. Performance management and reward: | Performance appraisal |
| | Promotion |
| | Remuneration |
| 3. Human resource development: | Skills audits |
| | Career planning, engagement and retention |
| | Re-skilling |
| | Learning and development |
| | Management development and succession planning |
| 4. Employment relations: | Wellness |
| | Labour flexibility and work/life balance |

# Overview  SR Framework

Literature, Industry & ARA 2008 recommendations

Scoping Report findings

P4 111 *Skills Recognition Framework*. **Interviews, current processes**

Products developed and trialled

1. An extensive literature review (stand-alone product)
2. A mapping of '*leading practice*' skills recognition
3. A **rail specific** handbook of SR *leading practice* strategies
4. A **rail specific** national SR Framework and Toolkit (with how to use guides, CDs,)
5. Final Research Report

# Gladstone- Resource Rich Region (RRR)

- *Economic, Social and Cultural Contributions of Skilled Migrants & Families: Gladstone case study*

- Human capital, social capital and cultural capital theoretical framework

- Attraction & retention of skilled migrants & families to regional areas

- Skill shortages, regional sustainability, RRR- paramount

# Gladstone-Industrial & RRR





50% General Practictioners and dentist overseas trained

Diverse and multicultural community

Key Issues:

Non recognition of OS qualifications and experience - spouses
Skills wastage & atrophy

Lack of services (incl. childcare & transport)



Major LNG Industry Locations – Curtis Island

- **Dr Roslyn Cameron**
- **Senior Lecturer & Head of Discipline - HRM**
- **School of Business and Law**
- **Central Queensland University**
- **Australia**
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