

Information & Communications Technologies Industry: workforce development challenges and opportunities presented by the NBN

The Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) industry has a deep influence on the Australian and global economies. In 2009-10 revenue for the ICT industry in Australia was estimated at \$82 billion with a workforce of 283,000. Computer and information services made up the largest and fastest growing category of ICT services exports.

Innovation & Business Skills Australia's (IBSA) Environment Scan (Escan) 2011, *Skilling diverse workforces – innovation, leadership and beyond* and the *Information and Communications Technology Industry Escan* provide analysis of the social, technological, economic and labour market environments influencing workforce development and skills demand in the ICT Industry, with particular focus on the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN).

A trend identified in the ICT workforce is that while growth and security are assured with the Australian Government's investment in the \$43 billion NBN, there are some shortages and skills needs in supporting business and government to fully utilise the NBN. The telecommunications workforce is expected to experience shortages in trades (joiners and linespeople) and cablers (data and telecommunications); shortages in the IT workforce are likely to be applications developers and in health and supply chain management.

The Escan also reported that further growth of the digital economy will affect all ICT businesses and service providers and skills needs are anticipated in systems analysis, information and system security, database and systems administrators, software and applications programmers, multimedia specialists, web developers, graphic and web designers and illustrators along with digital reception and network integration. In order to maximise opportunities from government investment in skills, small and medium businesses will need to ensure they have core capabilities in computer and digital literacy as well as innovation, application development, micro-business and virtual service management.

The NBN and associated growth of the digital economy are swiftly moving changes that will impact upon all sectors of the ICT industry; IBSA's Escan has shown that these challenges will in fact see great opportunities for growth and profitability, as long as the right skills - qualifications and skill sets - are there to meet the emerging needs of industry.

Recommendations from Escan 2011 are that government, industry and employers, training providers and IBSA develop strategies to engage small and medium business in workforce development, support skills development for the successful roll out of the NBN, align Training Package qualifications with other industry certification, respond to the need for cross industry qualifications and identify models that support articulation to higher education programs.

Looking ahead to Escan 2012, IBSA is undertaking a national survey of industry associations and a series of national industry consultations to identify the most pressing workforce development issues in the Information and Communications Technologies and other industries; Escan 2012 will be available in March 2012.

The *ICT Industry Escan* and information on the upcoming industry consultations is available on the IBSA website <http://www.ibsa.org.au/news-and-projects/environment-scan.aspx>