



12 February 2020

Adult and Community Education (ACE) Aotearoa

Submission on the Productivity Commission Issues Paper

Training New Zealand's workforce: Technological Change and the future of work

### **About Us**

ACE Aotearoa is the lead agency for the Adult and Community Education sector in New Zealand. There are currently over 600 ACE organisations in New Zealand who work with 73,000 learners. ACE courses offer personal enrichment, foundation learning, cultural enrichment and professional/vocational enrichment. These courses may be self-funded or funded by the Tertiary Education Commission.

As well as professional development to the sector through workshops and conferences ACE Aotearoa works with government and agencies such as the Ministry of Education to support the sector.

### **Responses to the Issues Paper**

#### **Context**

The context for the report discusses workplace, on campus at a tertiary education provider and online and distance learning. We think the context should also include reference to Adult and Community Education which occurs throughout New Zealand in places such as Rural Education Activities Programmes (REAPS) through to Akau Design and Architecture (an example the Productivity Commission used in its March 2017 Report New models of tertiary education).

We agree that training can lift the skills of working-age migrants. ACE organisations such as English Language Partners are doing this. We also agree about rethinking arbitrary boundaries and are a strong supporter of the micro-credential concept.

We strongly agree that greater responsiveness means rethinking arbitrary boundaries, and the need for a responsive and innovative system. Unfortunately these sentiments do not seem to have carried through to the recommendations.

## **The New Zealand Workforce**

ACE Aotearoa completed an Environmental Scan of the sector in 2019. This document is available from [www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/news-resources/research](http://www.aceaotearoa.org.nz/news-resources/research). Whilst this report is not focussed on the New Zealand workforce it does provide an overview of the activities undertaken in the sector including driver licensing and education.

### **Improving the education and training system**

We note the concern re new migrants' eligibility to government- funded vocational education and agree that this needs to be clarified. We are interested in the potential of the 15 Regional Skills Leadership Groups (RSLGs). Of particular interest is understanding how they will relate to ACE provision throughout New Zealand. ACE providers have been meeting the needs of their local communities for many years.

We are strong advocates of lifelong learning and see a role for ACE provision in meeting some of this need (for example digital literacy).

We also agree with the issues raised in the "Educating New Zealand's future workforce" regarding the lack of good quality career advice. This seems to have disappeared into a black hole since the merger of the Careers Service into the Tertiary Education Commission in 2017. Without a strong Careers Service adults are ill prepared to make informed learning choices.