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CIRCULAR TO DEPARTMENTS AND AUTHORITIES NO. 19 OF 1991

ENGLISH IN THE WORKPLACE TUITION FOR STATE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES

The current policy on English in the Workplace tuition is stated in Circular No. 13 of 1988 to Departments and Authorities. The purpose of this circular is to notify Department and agencies of some changes to this policy and about the formation of a new body to coordinate workforce literacy issues.

Review

During 1990 the Department of Productivity and Labour Relations (DOPLAR) chaired a steering committee comprising representatives of the Trades and Labour Council, the Office of the Directorate of Equal Opportunity in Public Employment, the Adult Migrant Education Service and a number of public sector agencies, which undertook a review of this policy. A copy of the report prepared as a result of the review can be obtained by contacting Glenys Sefton on 222 7615.

Extension of existing policy

The major recommendation arising from the review was that the provision of English in the workplace tuition should continue and be extended to cover employees with an English speaking background who lack basic literacy skills as well as employees with a non English speaking background. The extension of the policy is seen as necessary owing to the recognition that illiteracy is a major barrier to successful training arising out of award restructuring, safety in the workplace and career progression.

This recommendation has been approved by the Cabinet Sub Committee on Labour Relations.

Those agencies which are already offering English language training to all employees on the basis of need and without regard for language background will

not be affected. Other agencies with employees who have literacy difficulties who are not covered by the current policy may need to extend the scope of their present programs

Agencies are reminded that the award provisions require union consultation in the selection of employees and course content for English language tuition. The policy recommends the formation of a consultative committee involving management, unions and course provider to oversee the implementation of training under this policy.

Formation of a Workplace Literacy Consultative Committee

Another recommendation arising from the review was that tuition under this policy needs to be integrated into the training arising from award restructuring. At present Industry Employment Training Councils are being established in Western Australia. They will develop competency standards for training courses in specific industries. It is important that questions relate to the specification of literacy standards in these training courses are addressed.

A Workplace Literacy Consultative Committee has been established to assist in the development of an effective and consistent approach to the implementation and promotion of workforce literacy training in Western Australia. It will explore mechanisms by which literacy training can be accredited and integrated into industry training and will liaise with other Western Australian, interstate and Federal bodies working in this area. The Committee will provide policy advice to Government on workforce literacy issues.

The organisations represented initially on this Committee will be the Confederation of WA Industry, the State Employment and Skills Development Authority (SESDA), the Trades and Labor Council and the Departments of Productivity and Labour Relations and Technical and Further Education. Other representatives may be invited at a later stage.

Co-ordination of English language tuition providers in the public sector

DOPLAR will coordinate joint meetings of representatives of agencies implementing this policy. Information will be sent out to help coordinate implementation and to keep agencies informed of progress made by the Workforce Literacy Consultative Committee. Agencies are invited to nominate a contact person, together with job title, address and telephone number by ringing Alison Faulkner, telephone 222 7643 or Glenys Sefton on 222 7615, or by writing to this Department.

NOEL WHITEHEAD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

2 September 1991

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