

Outdoor Recreation

Industry predicts a fall in the supply of graduates in Western just as employment opportunities are increasing in the State.

Overview

About \$2.1 billion is spent each year on nature-based outdoor activities in Western Australia, contributing to 18,500 direct and indirect full-time equivalent jobs.ⁱ Job roles in this sector include outdoor activity assistant, outdoor activity guide, outdoor activity instructor, outdoor recreation assistant, outdoor leader and outdoor recreation program manager.ⁱⁱ Nationally, employment increases of 18% were predicted in one occupation, Outdoor Adventure Guides, between 2018 and 2023 (from 4800 to 5700).ⁱⁱⁱ A skilled workforce is important in meeting the current demand for nature-based outdoor activity and underpins future market growth and increased economic and health benefits to the state.^{iv}

The State government is implementing a number of initiatives to grow the outdoor recreation industry. For example, funds are being made available to set up mountain bike trails and train the requisite staff to build and maintain them.^v It would be timely to ensure that once built, workers are ready to guide others on these trails.

Predicted fall in graduate numbers as job opportunities increase

The outdoor recreation sector in WA is concerned that the supply of outdoor recreation graduates is at risk of declining just as the sector is predicted to grow with opportunities for employment from growth in tourism and government health initiatives. Training providers have been exiting outdoor recreation training because of the expense of delivery in areas like registration, compliance and equipment, the perceived high-risk nature of activities, and the difficulty of maintaining staff currency. Technical skills for outdoor recreation trainers are expensive to attain and currency difficult to maintain unless trainers are working in the sector as well as teaching. This is even more so in regional areas where there may be thin training markets and limited local job opportunities. Good quality equipment required to run courses is expensive. The combination of all these factors has resulted in training organisations choosing not to deliver outdoor recreation qualifications.

There are only two private and three public providers registered to deliver outdoor recreation training in Western Australia, and as they are only delivering lower level qualifications, there is a growing shortage of trained workers within the sector. A new training package was endorsed in September 2019 with four non-equivalent qualifications, requiring an amendment to scope for training organisations rather than the simpler process for equivalent qualifications. Going forward, only two public providers have indicated they will deliver the Certificates II or III in Outdoor Recreation. As yet there are no providers likely to deliver the Certificate IV although Notre Dame University has indicated some interest in adding the Certificate IV to their scope to support an existing Degree program.

Two sets of standards are about to be implemented that will affect Outdoor Recreation training:

- Australian Adventure Activity Standards (National)
- Department of Education - Outdoor Education and Recreation Activities for Public Schools (WA)

Both standards will set minimum ratios for outdoor activities and minimum qualification levels for teachers and trainers. In WA schools, lower teacher to student ratios will be mandated; eg. 1:8 or 1:10. This presents two

problems; a possible increase in the number of staff required, increasing course costs, and a mismatch with minimum class sizes for courses funded by the State which are far higher; eg. 1:16.

In 2018, numbers enrolling in the Certificate II in Outdoor Recreation were strong (1786 in public schools, 38 in public providers) but it is expected that WA Certificate of Education changes, removing the requirement to graduate with a minimum Certificate II, will lead to a decline in Certificate II enrolments from 2020. Enrolment numbers for the Certificate III in 2018 were lower (13 in public schools, 51 in public providers). The Certificate III is generally accepted as the minimum workforce entry qualification, with graduates having the basic technical expertise and the opportunity to develop and gain experience on-the-job or through further study.

Certificate IV graduates are in demand in the sector. They have the maturity, skills and requisite level of judgment to assess risk and make decisions and a range of enterprise skills like decision-making, problem solving and the ability to work independently, that mean they succeed and remain in the workplace. There are currently no local training organisations for the Certificate IV in Outdoor Leadership (previously Outdoor Recreation) and as a consequence, very few graduates. This means a shortage of graduates for employment and places a limitation on outdoor tourism businesses needing experienced staff to expand. Pathways into university study are also impacted as the Certificate IV satisfies course entry for a number of sport and outdoor recreation related university courses in WA.

FutureNow Activity

FutureNow has met or had discussions with public training providers, the University of Notre Dame and industry stakeholders in both metropolitan and regional areas to identify and confirm the issues outlined above regarding training delivery for outdoor recreation qualifications.

Next Steps

1. Marine units in the Certificates II and III will continue to be delivered by South Metro TAFE. South Regional TAFE is about to re-establish Certificates II and III in Outdoor Recreation but will commence with technical skills that are inexpensive to deliver and then build a business case to introduce more technically challenging activities if initial courses are successful.
2. The two TAFE providers and other industry stakeholders including the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, and the Outdoor Education Group, are currently collaborating to implement Certificates II and III from the new training package and to establish how they can best share knowledge and technical skills and maintain staff currency in a cost effective way.
3. Notre Dame University, already an RTO, is considering adding the Certificate IV to the scope of its RTO. FutureNow will facilitate a meeting with stakeholders to determine if this option is a possibility.
4. Training organisations and industry see the opportunities for jobs growth in this sector and are enthusiastic about establishing training to meet the demand, however the costs of maintaining teacher currency and setting up training for outdoor recreation can be prohibitive and stakeholders are seeking opportunities for some of these costs to be underwritten in Western Australia.
5. There is a mismatch between the lower teacher to student ratios that will be required by two new sets of standards for safety and the minimum class ratio required for State funding. Ratios for safe training delivery will need to be taken into account in the State's funding of outdoor recreation courses.

References

- i. Western Australia's Nature-Based Outdoor Economy, A Marsden Jacob Report, SkillsIQ, September 2018, p. 3
- ii. Sport and Recreation Industry Reference Committee 2019 Industry Skills Forecast, 2019, SkillsIQ, p. 7-8
- iii. Australian Government Jobs Outlook, Career Code 4522.
- iv. Western Australia's Nature-Based Outdoor Economy, A Marsden Jacob Report, SkillsIQ, September 2018, p 4
- v. Media Statement, 'Collie gearing up for new mountain bike trails', <https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2019/10/Collie-gearing-up-for-new-mountain-bike-trails.aspx>, 2 October 2019.