



# Submission

Victorian Farmers Federation Submission

## The Victorian Farmers Federation

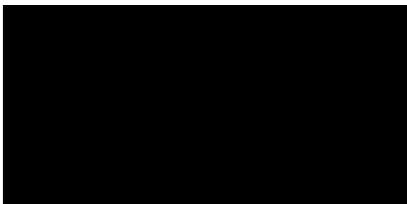
The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is the only recognised consistent voice on issues affecting rural Victoria and we welcome the opportunity to comment to the inquiry into career advice activities in Victoria schools.

Victoria is home to 25 per cent of the nation's farms. They attract neither government export subsidies nor tariff support. Despite farming on only three per cent of Australia's available agricultural land, Victorians produce 30 per cent of the nation's agricultural product. The VFF represents the interests of our state's dairy, livestock, grains, horticulture, flowers, chicken meat, pigs and egg producers.

The VFF consists of a Board of Directors, a member representative Policy Council to set policy and seven commodity groups representing dairy, grains, livestock, horticulture (including flowers), chicken meat, pigs, and egg industries.

Farmers are elected by their peers to direct each of the commodity groups and are supported by Melbourne-based and regionally located staff.

Each VFF member is represented locally by one of the 200 VFF branches across the state and through their commodity representatives at local, district, state and national levels. The VFF also represents farmers' views on hundreds of industry and government forums.



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## Foreword

The Victorian Farmers Federation welcomes the opportunity to comment to the Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian Schools.

## Introductory comments

The terms of reference for the Inquiry into career advice activities in Victoria schools are:

- (1) Examining the relationship between career advice activities and workforce participation of young Victorians;
- (2) Investigating the extent to which career advice activities meet the needs of school leavers;
- (3) Examining the challenges advisers face helping young Victorians transition from education to the workforce;
- (4) Considering strategies to improve the effectiveness of career advice activities for school leavers;
- (5) Investigate the career advice needs of young people in regional Victoria and ways to address these needs; and
- (6) Exploring what other jurisdictions both in Australia and overseas have in place that could be implemented in Victoria

The Victorian Farmers Federation has for many years lobbied state governments for a closer relationship between the agriculture sector and career advice activities in Victorian schools. In VFF's submission to the Inquiry into Agricultural Education and Training in Victoria (September 2011) Agriculture career advice was highlighted as a way to increase student intake into TAFEs and universities. More discussion on this will be highlighted in the submission.

## Victorian Farmers Federation recommendations

### **1. Examining the relationship between career advice activities and workforce participation of young Victorians;**

The VFF opines that there is a direct relationship between career advice activities and workforce participation of young Victorians in certain industries. In 2011 the VFF made submissions to the Victorian Parliament's Education and Training Committee on the 'Inquiry into agricultural education and training in Victoria', and gave evidence at the hearing in relation to the inquiry. At this hearing the VFF commented that career officers or guidance officers are not generally aware of what careers are available in the agriculture sector and as a consequence they do not promote agriculture. In its oral submission the VFF stressed the importance of ensuring that school students are made aware of career paths in agriculture. In order to raise awareness careers advisors and guidance officers need to communicate and inform students about the available opportunities that exist in agriculture.

As a result of VFF lobbying, **the Food and Fibre (Primary Industries) Project (the Project)** was developed.

### **The Food and Fibre (Primary Industries) Project (the Project)**

The key objective of the Project was to improve the understanding of careers advisors in secondary schools in Victoria of employment and career opportunities in the food and fibre sector (Primary Industries).

The Project was funded for a two year period commencing July 2013 and concluding June 2015. Funding was provided by the then Department of Environment and Primary Industries and auspiced by the Victorian Farmers Federation.

Utilising existing networks and partnerships, an initial pilot was conducted around the South West region, the outer western suburban fringe and other schools within the urban fringes that the VFF already had existing relationships with. The schools targeted were a balance of size, sector, and culture with either a current interest in food and fibre delivery or with no knowledge of the food and fibre industry.

The expected outcomes of the project were to:

- Influence those who provide guidance in career selection in secondary schools by using food and fibre throughout broader curriculum disciplines.
- Broaden the traditional thinking of how a student can map a career in the food and fibre industries. Food and fibre education is currently not extensive enough to meet the workforce demand.
- Inform careers advisors in secondary schools of opportunities for young people considering a career in the food and fibre sector.
- Assist careers advisors in identifying skills gaps of young people interested in a career in the food and fibre sector and providing information on training courses or qualifications and available funding or subsidies.
- Identify barriers between studying agriculture at secondary school and pursuing a career in food and fibre and how these may be overcome.
- Establish the Food and Fibre industries as 'a career of choice'.

The key involvement of the Food and Fibre Careers Officer in achieving the outcomes was to:

- Focus on the relationships with careers teachers with the provision of a "Food and Fibre Careers' resource kit". This resource kit was developed in consultation with food and fibre industries and include, where necessary the contact information for a variety of people from the food and fibre sector willing to present to schools or be involved in some capacity.
- Working with existing networks such as Primary Industries Education Foundation and Career Education Association of Victoria to coordinate and deliver food and fibre resource kits for careers advisors in secondary schools.
- Assisting careers advisors with conversations on career action plans for young people interested in a career in the food and fibre sector, including information on training courses, qualifications and available funding or subsidies.
- Attendance at relevant careers expos within the identified regions, where attendance was identified as strategic and practicable within the limited budget available.

- Promoting information on effective models of agriculture delivery currently employed by other schools across Victoria.
- Keeping up to date with labour market information by engaging industry representatives.
- Working with secondary schools career advisors within identified regions to organise guest presentations, work experience programs, and excursions.

The VFF believes this project was very successful and through the project delivery, several schools improved linkages to industry organisations and the food and fibre professionals. As a direct result students and teachers gained a greater exposure to the food and fibre sector. Unfortunately the funding was not continued after the project ended. The VFF continues to lobby for the project to be expanded as it believes that the relationship between career advice activities and workforce participation of young Victorians is a very important one.

The VFF recommends that the Project be continued and expanded to Regional Victoria so it can continue on the valuable work it was doing in this area.

## **2. Investigating the extent to which career advice activities meet the needs of school leavers**

The VFF suggests that a survey be conducted with the students to see if they are aware of career opportunities when they leave school in year 12. Also survey ex- school leavers one or two years from when they left school to see if the career advice activities meet the student's needs. Data on this study would be useful.

## **3 Examining the challenges advisers face helping young Victorians transition from education to the workforce**

The issue surrounding the transition from school to the workforce is a universal one and not only the state of Victoria is facing this issue but other countries such as England have done enormous amount of research on the transition from education to the workforce. In England researchers have found that “there is a pressing need to increase the status of careers leadership within schools, driving improvement and creating a pipeline of senior school leaders committed to championing pupil employability”. (TeachFirst Careers education in the classroom the role of teachers in making young people work ready).

In England studies (Impetus 2014) have shown that character skills underpin success in school and in employment. According to the study students need to be self- aware, receptive, driven, self-assured and resilient and informed.

Self-aware means able to take responsibility for themselves and their actions, able to control themselves and to recognise their strengths and weaknesses;

Receptive means able to take feedback and advice, willing to address weaknesses, to learn and try new things;

Driven means able to see a job to its conclusion, to be punctual, well-organised and positive;

Self-assured means willing to ask questions and seek advice, to work alone without direction, able to be confident in social situations and in their work;

Resilient means able to cope with setbacks, rejection and criticism, determined to overcoming obstacles and able to stay calm under pressure; and

Informed being knowledgeable about the job market, how to search for a job and to effectively interview, knowledgeable about how to conduct themselves in a professional environment.

Melbourne University has embraced some of these character skills in the Agricultural courses currently being delivered. Students are getting practical human resource skills. VFF Workplace Relations Department team has attended career days at the Melbourne University to give valuable input to students on how to get the best out of their resumes. Basically, the university has organised days where students would bring their resumes in for review and feedback with industry involvement. The VFF supports giving students at all levels, education on life skills so that they will be work ready when they leave their educational institution.

In today's workforce new jobs are being created and traditional positions become with the onset of new technology outdated. Students need to be more adaptable and may find that they have more than one career over their lifetime. A change in career path is quite common in the agriculture industry. Many engineers, teachers, managers go back to the family farm and manage the dairy farm for example, so transferable skills are required.

Also there is an urgent need for government to employ contact officers who are knowledgeable in the current courses that learning institutions are offering so that employers/students can contact the officers who will answer their questions on traineeships, TAFE Courses and any requirements that they need to know. Due to lack of funding the networking of course information has declined.

#### **4. Considering Strategies to improve the effectiveness of career advice activities for school leavers;**

University open days has been an effective strategy for school leavers and current students in obtaining information on their proposed career path. Also the Victorian Government has a dedicated website Skills First where students and industry can access information.

Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA) has done a lot of important work in developing strategies to improve the effectiveness of career advice activities for school leavers.

PIEFA stands for the leader in food and fibre education. Their vision is "An Australian Community that understands and values its primary industries sector". Their mission is to engage and inform students, teachers and the broader community about the role and importance of primary industries in the Australian economy, environment and wider community, and their career opportunities available through the primary industries and along the chain of supply of food and fibre products.

PIEFA's objectives are:

- Provide national leadership and coordination of initiatives to encourage primary industries education in schools through a partnership between industry, government and education;

- Commission, coordinate, facilitate and manage national projects to encourage primary industries education in schools;
- Provide a source of credible, objective and educational resources for schools to maintain and improve community confidence in Australia’s primary industries; and
- Communicate primary industries research and development outcomes in a format accessible for schools and encourage interest from schools in primary industries related careers.

Another strategy for providing information has been the establishment of Primezone. Primezone is a web-portal for teachers and this portal is operated by PIEFA.

The portal provides teachers with a one stop shop to access a range of high quality primary industries education resources from Foundation to year 12 all linked to the Australian curriculum.

PIEFA has also joined forces with Career Harvest and this alliance should boost career opportunities in food and fibre.

Recently, PIEFA negotiated with the deans of agriculture to take over the operation, management and further development of the primary industries career information hub, [www.careerharvest.com.au](http://www.careerharvest.com.au).

Career Harvest aims to be the “go to” site for food and fibre career information in Australia.

**5. Investigate the career advice needs to young people in regional Victoria and ways to address these needs;**

The Agriculture sector actively invests in measures to ensure that Australians have access to skill development that targets the needs of the sector and attract people to work in agriculture. For example the Victorian Farmers Federation provides input to the National Farmers Federation (NFF). The NFF is a member of the Primary Industries Education Foundation of Australia (PIEFA); the NFF provides support for the PIEFA mission to

*“Engage and inform students, teachers and the broader community about the role and importance of primary industries in the Australian economy, environment and wider community, and the career opportunities available through the primary industries and along the chain of supply of food. “*

- The VFF and the NFF is an active contributor to the recent reform of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system to better align skill development with the employment needs of industry.
- The NFF created and is a member of Skills Impact, the National Skills Service Organisation to develop the operation of the Industry Reference Committees which develop competency skills standards and qualifications for use by the Industry and the VET sector.

- The Picasso Cow program delivered at Primary Schools where schools are provided with a blank, life size, fibreglass dairy cow to design and paint in one of three related themes – unbeatable Bones, Fuel for Life and Farm to Plate. The Picasso Cows program has been run in over 500 schools, reaching over 80 000 students across Australia.
- The dairy industry Cows Create Careers<sup>1</sup> program introduces students to the industry in farming, food processing, technical and research areas and promotes the many career opportunities in the industry. Each year around 14,000 students participate across 23 dairying regions in Australia.
- In 2006, the dairy industry recognised the need to have a dedicated training centre to upskill and train current and future dairy farmers. The National Centre for Dairy Education delivers nationally accredited courses in agriculture from Certificate II through to Advanced Diploma and offers pathways to degree levels.
- The dairy industry also has resources available to attract people to embark in a career. The Australian dairy industry has developed Stepping Stones. Stepping Stones provides information on the different types of careers on a dairy farm and explores the different pathways available for people who are either looking to start a career on a dairy farm, or for experienced people who want to progress their dairy career further.
- A recent article in a regional Victorian paper shows how the importance of activities related to the agricultural sector has an effect.

**Timboon Agriculture Project fires up curriculum** by Evard Himmelreich 20 November 2017

“ From the challenges of growing food on Mars to the probability maths of chook bingo, the Timboon Agriculture Project’s (TAP) expo presented a dazzling array of ways in which agriculture is integrated in Timboon P-12 School curriculum.

Many of the agriculture-linked activities at the expo last week were demonstrated by the school’s students and showed not only their fellow students but the wider community the host of school programs that focus on agriculture.

School principal Sean Fitzpatrick said TAP had started in 2012 as a way to engage the local community in education. The school had partnered with hundreds of outside organizations to deliver a unique program, Mr Fitzpatrick said.

He said the school was now mentoring other schools about building up an agricultural focus in their education programs.

And for the uninitiated, chook bingo involves guessing where a chicken will leave a dropping on a sheet of marked squares.

Activities such as these have an important bearing on the child's development and opens them up to opportunities they may never know about."

**(6) Exploring what other jurisdictions both in Australia and overseas have in place that could be implemented in Victoria**

There would be many jurisdictions around the world that are having the same concerns surrounding career advice and workforce participation. As mentioned in question 3 England has done a lot of research in this area. In Australia, different industries are producing material outlining career paths in order to attract future employees, such as in the mining, cotton, grains and dairy industries just to mention a few.

Research into the different jurisdictions needs to be undertaken. Moreover, there needs to be a coordinated approach so that every opportunity is given to the student to find the most suitable career for them.



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