



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Secretary
Lisa Paul AO PSM

Mr David Southwick MP
Chair
Education and Training Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE 3002

Dear Mr Southwick

Inquiry into Agricultural Education and Training in Victoria

Thank you for your letter of 28 July 2011 concerning the Victorian Parliament's Education and Training Committee Inquiry (the Inquiry) into Agricultural Education and Training in Victoria.

Please find attached the Department's submission to the Inquiry. I apologise for the submission not being submitted by 30 September 2011. I understand that officers of this Department have kept your Committee secretariat informed about the timing of the submission.

The submission outlines a number of key initiatives the Australian Government is undertaking to inform students about careers in agriculture, enhancing pathways to agricultural courses and monitoring and disseminating data on the agricultural skills supply and demand. For example, the Department publishes the 'Job Guide', which is an annual publication distributed to all Year 10 students. The booklet provides information on over 500 jobs and advice regarding entering higher education.

The Government is providing \$3.6 million over 2009—2011 to the Primary Industry Centre for Science Education (PICSE), which is an important initiative to encourage more students to consider agricultural careers. To assist the Inquiry, the Department has provided data on the number of higher education and vocational education and training students participating in agricultural related courses in Victoria and Australia. I note that Victorian enrolments in agricultural higher education have increased over the 2001—2010 period.

The Committee should note that the Higher Education Support Amendment (Demand Driven Funding System and Other Measures) Bill 2011, which introduces a demand driven funding system for undergraduate places at public universities, was passed by the Parliament on 14 September 2011. Industries, such as agriculture, will be able to work with schools, universities, and organisations like PICSE, to encourage students to undertake courses that meet the needs of employers.

I wish you well with the inquiry and would appreciate receiving a copy of your Committee's report.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Paul

October 2011



Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) Submission to the Victorian Parliament's Education and Training Committee Inquiry into Agricultural Education and Training in Victoria

The Australian Government acts in three key ways to encourage and support students to consider future employment in particular industry sectors: firstly, ensuring that students have information on which to base their career choices; secondly, funding initiatives for greater industry/education sector collaboration to attract and inform students; and thirdly, collecting and disseminating data to better inform governments, agencies, stakeholders and students of skills needs areas.

Informing Students

The Government has introduced a range of measures to inform students about education and careers related to agricultural science and related disciplines.

The Primary Industries Education Foundation (PIEF) was established in 2008 and includes representatives from the education and training sector, agriculture sectors and government. PIEF provides national leadership and direction to raise awareness and promote primary industries in schools, including coordinating at a national level, the development and distribution of education information and resources.

The *Job Guide* is written and produced annually for national distribution to every Year 10 student. It has information on more than 500 jobs and provides advice about options regarding university study, vocational training and information about what employers are looking for. The cover of *Job Guide 2012* will feature agricultural themes in recognition of 2012 being the 'Australian Year of the Farmer' and rural related occupations will be highlighted in the book. The *Job Guide* is also available at: <http://www.jobguide.deewr.gov.au>.

DEEWR's annual *Australian Jobs* publication is distributed to all secondary schools, and it includes information about the labour market for the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry. The 2011 edition notes that over the five years to 2015-16, around 27 000 new jobs are expected to be created in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry in Australia. It also highlights the fact that the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry is a major employer in regional Australia, accounting for around one in every three workers in some areas, and that there are many entry level and professional opportunities in the industry with sound employment prospects. *Australian Jobs* is available at www.deewr.gov.au/australianjobs.

The Government has announced its intention to develop a MyUniversity website by January 2012. The MyUniversity website will be an interactive, searchable website that will allow students to make an informed choice about what and where to study. The website will include a variety of information about Australian higher education providers including: courses; institutional profile information; student and staff statistics; and outcomes-based indicators such as results of student satisfaction surveys and graduate destination surveys.



Industry/Education sector collaboration

Collaboration between industry and education providers is a significant element of Government initiatives to build Australia's future workforce and encourage students to continue studying beyond secondary education into VET and higher education.

The Trade Training Centres (TTCs) in Schools Program is an important part of the Government's Education Revolution and demonstrates its commitment to the value of technical education in the curriculum of all Australian secondary schools. Ten of the Victorian TTCs that have so far been awarded funding in the nationally-recognised VET qualifications will offer courses in agriculture. Students from an additional 44 schools will also access these facilities. (See **Appendix A** for a list of TTC sites and cluster schools). More schools will benefit from the TTCs in Schools Program through future funding rounds.

The Government will have an ongoing role in ensuring Australia's skill needs are met by the higher education system. Skills Australia's role has been expanded to advise the Government on the effectiveness of the higher education system in meeting skill needs.

Skills Australia is an independent statutory body, established in 2008 to provide advice to the Government on Australia's current, emerging and future workforce skills needs and workforce development needs. Its role has been expanded to advise the Government on the effectiveness of the higher education system in meeting these skill needs.

Skills Australia is to be subsumed by a new national workforce and productivity agency that was announced as part of the Building Australia's Future Workforce package in the 2011-12 Budget. The Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Workplace Relations announced at the National Press Club on 21 September 2011 that the Government was bringing forward the start date of the new agency to 1 October 2012. It was also announced that Peter Anderson (Chief Executive, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry) and Paul Howes (Secretary, Australian Workers Union) would join members of the Skills Australia board to form the interim Board of the new Agency.

The agency will engage directly with industry on workforce development issues and address sectoral and regional industry needs. In particular, the Agency will:

- administer the new National Workforce Development Fund;
- conduct skills and workforce research, including into the quality of jobs and future working life in Australia;
- drive engagement between industry, training providers and government on workforce development, apprenticeships and VET reform;
- develop and monitor sectoral skills and workforce development plans in conjunction with Industry Skills Councils and industry;
- provide independent advice on sectoral and regional skills needs to support workforce planning and productivity, including in small business; and
- promote workforce productivity by leading initiatives for the improvement of productivity, management innovation and skills utilisation within Australian workplaces.

The National Workforce Development Fund will assist individual enterprises to increase their workforce capacity by subsidising training for existing and new workers. The Fund will subsidise training for eligible qualifications from the Priority Occupations List including Certificate II, III, IV, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Vocational Graduate Certificate and Vocational Graduate Diploma, and may also support the delivery of Training Package Skill Sets in some circumstances. Enterprises are required to make a contribution to the cost of training which will be determined based on their size.



The Government provides funding to 11 Industry Skills Councils and Automotive Training Australia to support high quality training and workforce development and provide integrated advice to Government, Skills Australia and enterprises on workforce development and skills needs, primarily focusing on VET skills.

AgriFood Skills Australia (ASA) is the Industry Skills Council covering the rural, food processing (including beverages, wine and pharmaceuticals), meat, seafood, and racing industries. ASA is undertaking several initiatives that seek to address training, skills and workforce development needs of their industry sectors, including in regional Australia. Under the COAG *Green Skills Agreement*, ASA has reviewed its suite of Training Packages to embed sustainability knowledge, skills and principles in all relevant qualifications. Another initiative organised by the ASA is the 'Careers in Agrifood' project, which will publish a careers guide, supported by an online resource providing information about occupations, training opportunities and pathways into agricultural careers.

DEEWR is currently deploying 34 Education, Skills and Jobs Coordinators (ESJCs) to regional communities to work with local stakeholders, including Regional Development Australia Committees. ESJCs will engage with local businesses, education and training providers, local and state government, government service providers and community organisations to link programs and projects to achieve maximum benefit and drive the Australian Government's regional education, skills and jobs agenda. The ESJCs will also endeavour to provide communities with greater understanding and access to the full range of DEEWR's programs, such as the Workforce Development Fund, the Rural Tertiary Hardship Fund and the range of support available through vocational education and training programs. Currently ESJCs are located in the following Victorian Regional Development Australia areas.

Regional Development Australia Area	Current Base
• Hume	Bendigo
• Barwon South West • Grampians	Warrnambool
• Gippsland	Morwell
• Loddon-Mallee	Mildura

The Government has allocated \$45.2 million to extend the Priority Employment Area initiative to 2013, including \$20 million for a flexible funding pool to support new activities in 20 vulnerable areas across Australian. In each of these areas, a Local Employment Coordinator is deployed to work closely with employers, employment services and training providers, local communities and all levels of government to help drive local solutions to local labour market problems. Around 40 Jobs and Skills Expos will also be delivered across Australia to help connect job seekers with employment and training opportunities. There are two priority employment areas in regional Victoria - Ballarat-Bendigo (Central Victoria) for which the Local Employment Coordinator is Andrew Gibbs (0417 355 616), and North Eastern Victoria for which the Local Employment Coordinator is Julie Tyndall (0411 674 332).

The Government has provided funding for individual projects to encourage better pathways and more information for students to participate in agricultural science. For example, funding of \$3.6 million over 2009—2011 was provided through the former Diversity and Structural Adjustment Fund to the Primary Industry Centre for Science Education (PICSE). PICSE has the goal of attracting students to ongoing science education and primary industry careers.



PICSE collaborates with universities, regional communities and local primary industries, to attract students into tertiary science and to increase the number of skilled professionals in agribusiness and research institutions. PICSE focuses on the sciences of agriculture, aquaculture, ecology, horticulture, fisheries, water security, sustainability, climate change and the environment. It currently has activity centres located in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. It is notable that no Victorian institution currently participates in PICSE. More information can be found at: <http://www.picse.net/HUB/index.htm>.

The Australian Parliament recently passed the Higher Education Support Amendment (Demand Driven Funding System and Other Measures) Bill 2011, which introduces a demand driven funding system for undergraduate places at public universities. From 2012, public universities will no longer be dependent on the Government to set the number of places they can offer in a particular discipline. Instead, the Government will fund Commonwealth supported places for all undergraduate domestic students accepted into an eligible higher education course. Under the demand driven funding system, providers will decide how many places they will offer and in which disciplines in response to employer and student demand. Industries, such as agriculture, can work with schools, universities, and organisations like PICSE, to encourage students to undertake courses that meet the needs of employers.

Collecting and Disseminating Data

The Department monitors the labour market for skilled occupations through its ongoing skill shortage research program. Results are published as occupational reports, skill shortage publications and as national, state and territory skill shortages lists on the department's website at www.deewr.gov.au/skillshortages. The focus of the research is on skilled occupations (that is, those which generally require at least three years post-school education and training), mainly professions and trades.

Within agriculture, the research program includes occupations such as agricultural scientist/consultant, agricultural technician and a range of horticulture and animal occupations including shearer and nurseryperson. The basis of the research is a survey of employers who have recently advertised vacancies to determine their success recruiting the skills they need. Where vacancies are not identified, employers are contacted to discuss their recruitment needs and difficulties. The research results for these occupations are for the national labour market and the States and Territories. Data is not available at the regional level.

Survey results show national shortages have been persistent over recent years for agricultural scientists/consultants, and 2011 research confirms that employers experience significant difficulty recruiting these professionals. While, in general, employers experience less difficulty filling entry and graduate agricultural scientist/consultant positions, a number of employers commented that there are more jobs available than there are students graduating from agricultural degrees.

The labour market for agricultural technicians is less clear, as the occupation includes a widely diverse range of tasks across a number of agricultural sectors making a single rating unhelpful, although it is notable that employers in some locations experience difficulty recruiting. Employers recruiting shearers in 2010-11 filled around 85 per cent of surveyed vacancies and attracted an average of around two suitable applicants per vacancy. Employer experiences varied somewhat from state to state due to seasonal differences but, in general, employers had little difficulty recruiting shearers.



Employer comments suggest there is no shortage of nurserypersons and that turnover is low within the industry with vacancies often filled via word of mouth rather than through traditional advertising. Employers also commented on the high retention rate of qualified nurserypersons. Employers also indicated a strong trend in internal training of staff to the level of a qualified nurseryperson which fulfils labour requirements.

Generally across the agricultural, animal and horticultural occupations, the research shows applicants who were considered by employers to be unsuitable did not have the level of qualification sought or lacked experience. In some trade occupations, employers also mentioned poor quality of work and lack of breadth of skills as reasons for applicants being considered to be unsuitable. Lack of farm and field experience (including harvest and sowing field trials) were the main reasons for agricultural scientist applicants being considered to be unsuitable.

The DEEWR careers and information website Job Outlook (www.joboutlook.gov.au) provides key employment information on trends, characteristics and prospects covering over 350 individual occupations. The industry search option allows users to search by industry category and selecting the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry offers quick access to detailed information on over 20 of the main employing occupations (covering a range of skill levels) within the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry. Job Outlook is updated annually.

The Labour Market Information Portal (LMIP) provides up to date labour market information at national, state, and regional levels. The LMIP offers key employment statistics for agriculture, forestry and fishing in the six Victorian Employment Service Areas (ESAs) including levels of full-time, part-time and gender employment for each region. The LMIP can be found on the DEEWR website at www.deewr.gov.au/lmip.

The 2011 Australian Jobs Report indicates that 373,600 people are employed in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry across Australia. This is equivalent to 3 per cent of the total workforce. Over the five years to November 2010, employment in the industry rose by 24,900 (or 7.1%). Over the next five years, employment in the industry is expected to grow by 27,400 (or 7.3%). More than half the workers in the *Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing* industry do not hold post-school qualifications, suggesting on-the-job training and experience contribute significantly to skill development.¹

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research compiles extensive data on Vocational Education and Training (VET) enrolments and outcomes. For example, data on students in Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies is summarised in Table 1. Further detail can be found through the *Australian vocational education and training statistics: students and courses 2010*, which is available at: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2383.html>. The data indicates that after declining in 2007, the number of students enrolled in VET courses in agriculture, environmental and related studies has since returned to 2006 levels in both Victoria and nationally.

Table 1: Students enrolled in VET courses in the field of Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies²

	Enrolments				
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Victoria	20,300	19,300	18,900	18,300	20,100
Australia	77,400	70,600	71,000	71,000	77,200

¹ DEEWR, 2011 Australian Jobs report

² National Centre for Vocational Education Research: <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2383.html>



Table 2 provides DEEWR higher education statistics on the number of students in Victoria and Australia enrolled in, commencing and completing education in agricultural, environmental and related studies.

Table 2: Domestic students in higher education courses in the field of Agriculture, Environmental and Related Studies by: enrolment, commencement and completion³

	Enrolments									
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Australia	17,457	17,366	17,244	17,062	15,840	14,936	14,483	14,519	15,032	15,556
Victoria	2,902	2,833	3,040	2,884	2,797	2,801	2,870	3,050	3,441	3,767
Victorian share of National	16.6%	16.3%	17.6%	16.9%	17.7%	18.8%	19.8%	21.0%	22.9%	24.2%
	Commencements									
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Australia	6,147	6,244	6,233	6,170	5,147	4,873	5,061	5,275	5,473	5,615
Victoria	957	1,092	1,138	1,022	938	993	1,113	1,239	1,327	1,348
Victorian share of National	15.6%	17.5%	18.3%	16.6%	18.2%	20.4%	22.0%	23.5%	24.2%	24.0%
	Completions									
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Australia	3,561	3,473	3,718	3,493	3,297	3,117	2,937	2,861	2,968	3,009
Victoria	700	651	672	607	629	591	628	696	894	917
Victorian share of National	19.7%	18.7%	18.1%	17.4%	19.1%	19.0%	21.4%	24.3%	30.1%	30.5%

Victoria had increases in all three categories compared with declines in the national numbers from 2001 to 2010. From 2001 to 2010, Victorian enrolment numbers increased by 30 per cent, commencement numbers increased by 41 per cent and completion numbers increased by 31 per cent. This compares favourably to national data which indicates over the same period enrolment numbers decreased by 11 per cent, commencing students declined by 9 per cent and completions declined by 16 per cent.

³ Department of Education, Employment and Workplaces Relations – Unistats: <http://www.highereducationstatistics.deewr.gov.au/>.



Victorian Trade Training Centres offering Agricultural qualifications

Terminology

Lead schools: responsible for reporting on TTC construction and student activity

Project Name: name of TTC

Main Location / Sites: locations of TTC facilities

Cluster schools: contributed TTC funds to construction of TTC facilities and share in use of TTC facilities

1. Lead School: Edenhope College

Project Name: Edenhope Trade Training Centre - From Paddock to Plate

Sites

Main Location: Edenhope College

2. Lead School: Bendigo Senior Secondary College

Project Name: Bendigo Trade Training Centre

Sites

Main Location: Bendigo Senior Secondary College,

Also located at: Catholic College, Bendigo, Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE

Cluster schools

Bendigo South East Secondary College

Crusoe 7-10 Secondary College

Catholic College, Bendigo

Creek Street Christian College

Eaglehawk Secondary College

East Loddon P-12 College

Victory Christian College

Weeroona College Bendigo

3. Lead School: Horsham College - Horsham High Campus

Project Name: Wimmera Trade Training Centre

Sites

Main Location: Horsham College -Horsham High Campus

Also located at: University of Ballarat TAFE, Workco (Longerenong College), University of Ballarat, Horsham Campus, 289 Baillie St, Horsham

Cluster schools

Birchip P-12 School

Dimboola Memorial Secondary College

Edenhope College

Goroke P-12 College

Hopetoun Secondary College

Kaniva College

Murtoa College

Nhill College

Rainbow Secondary College

St Brigid's College



Warracknabeal Secondary College

4. **Lead School: Balmoral P-12 Community College**

Project Name: Balmoral Trade Training Centre

Sites

Main Location: Balmoral Community College

5. **Lead School: Healesville High School**

Project Name: Yarra Valley Polytechnic Trade Training Centre

Sites

Main Location: Healesville High School

Also located at: Upper Yarra Secondary College, Worawa Aboriginal College

Cluster schools

Upper Yarra Secondary College

Worawa Aboriginal College

6. **Lead School: Mount Evelyn Christian School**

Project Name: Trade Education Christian College Lilydale

Sites

Main Location: TEC College, Lots 3 & 4 Hightech Place, Lilydale;

Also located at: 10 Coulson Rd, Monbulk, Coldstream Airport, 96 Killara Rd, Coldstream.

Cluster schools

Donvale Christian College

Mountain District Christian School

7. **Lead School: Rutherglen High School**

Project Name: Youth North East Trade Training Centre

Sites

Main Location: Rutherglen High School 3685,

Also located at: Benalla College 3672, Bright P-12 College 3741, Mansfield Secondary College 3724, Myrtleford P-12 College 3737, Marian College 3737, Numurkah Secondary College 3636, Wangaratta District Specialist School 3676, GOTAFE (Wangaratta TEC) 3676, Yarrawonga College P-12 3730.

Cluster schools

Benalla College (Dunlop Campus)

Bright P-12 College

Mansfield Secondary College

Marian College

Myrtleford P-12 College

Numurkah Secondary College

Wangaratta District Specialist School

Wangaratta High School

Yarrawonga College P-12 Secondary Campus (previously Yarrawonga Secondary College)



8. Lead School: Casterton Secondary College

Project Name: Casterton and District Trade Training Centre

Sites

Main Location: Casterton Secondary College

9. Lead School: Caroline Chisholm Catholic College

Project Name: Western Access Trade Training Centre (Braybrook)

Sites

Main Location: Caroline Chisholm Catholic College, Braybrook

Also located at: Footscray City College, St. Albans Secondary College, Sunshine College (North Campus), Victoria University Secondary College (Deer Park Campus)

Cluster schools

Chairo Christian School (Drouin Campus)

Drouin Secondary College

Education Centre Gippsland Community College

Marist-Sion College

Neerim District Secondary College

St Paul's Anglican Grammar School

Trafalgar High School

Warragul and District Specialist School

10. Lead School: Warragul Regional College

Project Name: West Gippsland Trade Training Centre

Sites

Main Location: Warragul Regional College

Also located at: Apprenticeships Group Australia (Warragul), Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE, Education Centre Gippsland Community College, Trafalgar High School, Drouin Secondary College, Neerim District Secondary College, Marist-Sion College, St Pauls Anglican Grammar School, Chairo Christian School (Drouin Campus), Warragul and District Specialist School, Goulburn Ovens Institute of TAFE, National Centre for Dairy Education Australia

Cluster schools

Chairo Christian School (Drouin Campus)

Drouin Secondary College

Education Centre Gippsland Community College

Marist-Sion College

Neerim District Secondary College

St Paul's Anglican Grammar School

Trafalgar High School

Warragul and District Specialist School

