

**Victorian Government Response to the
Rural and Regional Committee**

**Inquiry into the Capacity of the Farming Sector
to Attract and Retain Young Farmers and
Respond to an Ageing Workforce**

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BACKGROUND

On 10 February 2011, the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Victoria resolved that the Rural and Regional Committee inquire into, consider and report no later than 8 February 2012 (extended to 30 May 2012) on the capacity of the farming sector to attract and retain young farmers and respond to an ageing workforce. The Terms of Reference for the inquiry were to:

- (a) examine the benefits to the agriculture sector of attracting more young farmers (including youth and early career workers);
- (b) examine the factors that affect the ability of the agriculture sector to attract and retain young farmers including, but not limited to:
 - (i) the profitability and business competitiveness of agricultural and other industries;
 - (ii) farming business acumen and recruitment strategies (including diversity);
 - (iii) remuneration packages and opportunities;
 - (iv) career pathways for youth and early career workers;
 - (v) existing models of farm business (ownership and management); and
 - (vi) the factors that influence rural quality of life including, but not limited to:
 - (A) resource and service access;
 - (B) farm family health;
 - (C) access to skills development and off-farm employment;
 - (D) leadership and other capabilities within the community;
 - (E) partnerships and networks (formal and informal); and
 - (F) the Victorian economy and government policy; and
- (c) provide strategies and recommendations that will promote the realisation of the benefits identified above.

The Committee's Final Report on the Capacity of the Farming Sector to Attract and Retain Young Farmers and Respond to an Ageing Workforce (the Report) was tabled in Parliament on 6 June 2012.

The report highlights the important contribution that young people make to the food and fibre production sector, and the role they can play in introducing new skills and innovations to the industry. When considering the historically low rate of young people taking up jobs in the industry, the report points to the need to improve the industry's image and improve pathways into agriculture, both through education and adoption of new business models. Critically, the report highlights the role of industry in furthering these outcomes, and emphasises the importance of improved coordination across different parts of industry and young farmer networks in achieving shared goals.

INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Government welcomes the report for its insights into the important issue of renewing and revitalising the farm workforce in Victoria. The report combines information and understanding from a large number of contributors to the Inquiry, reflecting the significance of the subject matter to Victoria's farming industries, regional areas, and wider economy and community. The Government values these contributions and has carefully considered them in preparing this response.

The Government has a longstanding commitment to assisting young people to benefit from the opportunities in Victoria's diverse farm industries, including agriculture, fisheries, food, forestry and related sectors. The report comes at a critical time for the industry: a significant proportion of baby boomer farmers are nearing retirement yet fewer young people are entering the industry. At the same time, global demand for food and fibre is increasing, creating exciting opportunities for the industry. This timely report provides a robust platform for government and industry initiatives that assist young people to make the most of these opportunities, that support industry in meeting its skill and labour requirements, and that nourish a vibrant future for rural and regional Victoria. The Government already has a suite of initiatives in place to help foster the next generation of young farmers. However, there are always opportunities to investigate new ideas and refocus existing initiatives. There is also a significant opportunity for industry to consider and implement the findings of this report.

Victoria's food and fibre industries

Victoria's food and fibre industries include agricultural production, fisheries and forestry, and also their up and downstream sectors (all included here under the term 'farming'). Between them these industries generate over 40 per cent of Victorian exports. They directly account for around ten per cent of all Victorian employment; substantially more once indirect employment is included, and much higher again in regional areas. Primary production and processing are concentrated in Victoria's rural and regional areas, but form an integral part of the whole Victorian economy.

As well as opportunities, Victoria's farming sectors are grappling with a range of challenges: a variable climate, unpredictable commodity prices, and changing community expectations are just some of these. Despite these obstacles, Victoria boasts many profitable farming businesses, but potential new entrants to farming seem deterred by an overly negative public image of farming. The Government is committed to working with farming communities and sectors to project a more positive image of the diverse and exciting farming careers and lifestyles open to new entrants. These opportunities are underpinned by growing farm productivity – and profitability – which opens up new pathways for those seeking to forge a rewarding career in the sector.

Challenges and solutions

Improving the image of farming may be central to attracting young people to the industry, but making the most of opportunities requires coordinated action. We need to appreciate that new entrants to farming will often be individuals in their mid to late thirties, such as rural expatriates wanting to return to regional Victoria to establish a family and a career change. Such individuals will bring both skills and capital to the sector, plus a demographic boost to regional communities.

Modern farming practices are increasingly sophisticated and demand technological capability and skills that did not exist on-farm a generation ago. To meet this challenge, farmers are developing increasingly nuanced skill sets, and farm enterprises are recruiting specialists with the capabilities required to manage particular aspects of the farm business. The need to meet these skills demands in coming years will be a key determinant of the ability of the farming sector to maintain productivity growth.

New entrants need better information about the pathways to farming in its many forms. Entrants to agricultural production are more likely to begin as farm workers and managers rather than farm owners. We also need to make smarter use of long term leasing, and other innovative business models, to unlock the potential of Victoria's youth, soil and sunshine.

Opportunities in farming are many and varied, but are not equal in their ability to offer attractive long term incomes and lifestyles. Attracting young people requires a positive image, but retaining them depends on competitive wages and working conditions, and clear paths for career development. Becoming better managers of people is a key challenge for industry. Most fundamentally, competitive opportunities can only be offered by businesses that are profitable, so industry and government must continue to invest in productivity improvements. This principle underpins the Victorian Government's approach to improving the attractiveness of agriculture as a career.

THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

The need to attract a skilled workforce to agriculture is clear, as the industry continues to be driven by increasingly sophisticated technology and management practices. The task of developing this workforce is a complex proposition, influenced by school-age education, skills development for those already in agriculture, availability of new business models and opportunities – both monetary and lifestyle – for those seeking a life in rural and regional areas. The Government response seeks to balance these issues and identify key initiatives – current and future – which will progress the Government's agenda of developing a thriving and productive agricultural workforce.

The role of industry

Problems of skills and labour shortages are principally challenges which industry must take the lead to address. In some parts of industry, this is already being done, with recruitment and development programs led by peak industry bodies producing consistently strong returns on investment. There is scope to promote the findings of this work throughout the food and fibre sector, and for all industry sectors to develop best practice approaches to the issue. The Government recognises the importance of its role in facilitating and developing solutions across different sectors, and will pursue these objectives as part of its commitment to rural Victoria and the food and fibre production sector.

Productivity driving industry growth

In order to attract and develop a highly-skilled workforce, the food and fibre sector must offer a rewarding career path to those considering agriculture against a number of competing choices. The best opportunities are offered by profitable farm businesses, and in a sector which is subject to fierce international competition, the most profitable farm businesses are those able to capture productivity gains. The Government's Growing Food and Fibre initiative supports this productivity growth by investing an additional \$61.4 million over four years in targeted research and development, improved biosecurity and improving market access opportunities for exporting producers. By driving productivity growth, Government will support the ability of the industry to increase profits and attract increasingly skilled entrants.

Agriculture in schools

Victoria's schools have the power to make individual decisions about their curriculum programs and implementation approaches, within the scope of the Victorian Essential Learning Standards. Teachers and principals, in conjunction with school councils, are responsible for the selection of teaching and learning resources and contexts for learning.

Victorian schools use elements from the Essential Learning Standards to develop courses to equip students with the skills and knowledge associated with agricultural education. In the early and middle years of schooling, these programs typically focus on subjects loosely related to agriculture. Students at the senior secondary level have a range of dedicated agriculture courses to choose from during their studies. In addition, the Government has created online learning resources for schools, such as FUSE (Find, Use and Share quality Education resources) and the Ultranet, which give students access to high-quality agriculture and horticulture learning materials.

Supporting strong pathways into agriculture

The Victorian Government is committed to supporting career development based around preparing young Victorians for the diverse pathway choices they face in senior secondary qualifications and for their future success in education, training and employment, including in agricultural industries.

The Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework can be used by teachers, trainers, careers practitioners, team leaders, curriculum coordinators and leaders in schools and Learn Local and Vocational Education and Training (VET) providers to develop and design a customised career education program for their young people.

Career development programs have several components, for example: career education programs; career counselling; information and resource management; pathways planning; mentoring; work experience programs; careers advice and guidance services. The Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework is designed to help all Victorian young people to prepare for their future through the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competencies required to self-manage their own careers.

The Government will work with agricultural and rural industries to strengthen alignment of activities to the Framework, including enhancing existing career development resources. This will ensure that agricultural industries are able to take a more strategic, comprehensive and coherent approach, to ensure that their efforts in this area can be targeted more effectively and produce the right outcomes.

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of a highly skilled agricultural workforce and recently announced changes to the vocational education and training system which have secured the future of agricultural training opportunities for young Victorians. Refocusing VET provides for increases in the government subsidies paid to regional training providers for the most critical certificate-level agriculture courses, and a new partnership approach that will ensure that industry will be able to work effectively with training providers to get the high quality training that it needs. The new partnership approach provides for direct relationships between employers, industry associations and other government departments through a new Industry Participation Model. While specific industry advisory arrangements through the new model are still being finalised, the strengthened relationships between government and peak agricultural industry associations will be critical to ensuring that industry will be better positioned to shape training market outcomes to meet its workforce needs.

Importance of regional liveability

The Government recognises that attracting a skilled and dynamic workforce to agriculture requires thriving rural and regional areas which offer a good quality of life. The Government is committed to investing in regional and rural Victoria to create new prosperity and a rich social fabric in these areas. The task for Government is to continue building on the strengths of the regions and regional communities and maintain growth in the face of economic challenges that are having varied impacts across industry sectors and regions.

The Government's integrated approach to regional and rural development is based on empowering communities to make decisions and is backed by a significant package of targeted funding programs. The centrepiece of the Government's regional development policy is the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund.

Through the Regional Growth Fund, the Government recognises that local people have a role to play in addressing the challenges faced by their communities. By building stronger communities, the Government also seeks to improve people's access to jobs, education, business opportunities and other aspects of community life such as recreation and volunteering. Stronger communities also make better use of existing resources, networks and partnerships, particularly in response to change.

The Government's aim through the Regional Growth Fund is to build on and mobilise the unique assets and advantages of the regions and strengthen the links between them. A long-term commitment to regional development by the Government will enable Victoria's regions to accelerate their growth.

The Government recognises that regional development requires strong leadership at the local and regional level. Further to this, the Government has allocated \$6 million under the Regional Growth Fund to the Regional Community Leadership Program, which works to enhance the leadership skills and capabilities of regional leaders in the business, local government and community sectors. The Program seeks to improve the ability of participants to respond to economic development challenges, and take advantage of opportunities which work to benefit the community as a whole.

For students considering tertiary studies in regional areas, research shows that the cost of living away from home is a significant barrier to taking up this option. The Government is addressing this by providing over \$15 million of funding under the Regional Growth Fund to support the construction of student accommodation in Ballarat, Warnambool and Waurin Ponds. By funding this work the Government is seeking to make it easier for young people from rural and regional areas to undertake study.

On 6 May 2012 Regional Development Victoria launched the Good Move campaign, showcasing families that moved from cities to regional Victoria for a better quality of life. The campaign was informed by research that revealed up to 11 per cent of Melbournians have a predisposition to moving to the regions. The Good Move campaign targets a metro audience to highlight the benefits of living in regional Victoria. As part of the Campaign, Victoria's inaugural Regional Victoria Living Expo was held in Melbourne in April 2012, bringing together Victoria's rural and regional councils with exhibitors to showcase the opportunities relocation to regional Victoria can offer. The Expo demonstrated the advantages that regional and rural areas hold in liveability, jobs and education opportunities. A second Expo will be held in 2013.

Initiatives targeting young farmers

The Victorian Government provides extensive support to the State's young farmers and young people working in, and with, the food and fibre sectors.

Almost 90 young farmers have received assistance in buying their first farm property from the Government's program to reduce the cost of entry through stamp duty exemption or concessions for young farmers.

The Government recognises the need to provide support, networking and professional development opportunities for young people in the food and fibre industry, and those living in rural Victoria. As an election commitment, the Government allocated \$1 million in funding to implement activities that support young farmers and rural youth locally.

Funding was committed to reinvigorating the Victorian Young Farmers; to resource DPI to coordinate young farmer activities and link different industry youth groups; and provide information for young people wanting to expand their agriculture knowledge through learning and development opportunities in Australia and overseas.

The report strongly advocates the role of networks and mentoring of young Victorians in the food and fibre industry. The Committee recognised that the landscape of young farmer networking groups across the State is fragmented. To ensure an ongoing working relationship across groups, and to create opportunities for knowledge sharing and linking activities, the Government will facilitate a Young Farmer State Committee, driven by representatives of key young farmer networks. Linking young farmer and rural youth groups with similar aims and aspirations will reduce duplication and competition for resources, and aid in sharing knowledge across industry sectors and the regions.

The Victorian Government recognises the responsibility of encouraging young farmers into real career opportunities in the sector. There is also a recognition that the industry environment is changing and that young entrants need to be more skilled in business management and planning. The Government allocated an additional \$1.2 million in the 2011-12 State Budget to continue the First Farm Grant (FFG) program. This was an extremely successful program administered in partnership with Rural Finance, with almost 300 farms being awarded the grant, which supports business planning and productivity growth in new farm enterprises.

The Government has worked in partnership with the State-owned Rural Finance Corporation in the administration of the Young Farmer Finance Scheme. The Young Farmers Finance Scheme provides reduced interest rate loans to young farmers for stock and equipment purchases, land purchases and leasing proposals, encouraging the progression of well-qualified Victorian farmers into asset ownership.

Through the Latrobe Valley Industry and Employment Roadmap, the Government is providing \$39,000 funding for a two day leadership and business development workshop, Young Dairy Development Program – Churn Milk into Money, targeted at young dairy farmers to improve their business decision making skills. The program is being delivered through the GippsDairy Board. The State of the Valley report, which informed the development of the Roadmap, also highlights the significant growth potential in agriculture and timber industries in the Latrobe Valley.

The Roadmap provides a clear direction for industry and training providers in the region to direct effort to training in these areas, ensuring that this growth opportunity is supported by a highly skilled workforce.

In addition, the Government is driving research and development with a \$61 million Growing Food and Fibre program to increase the productivity and profitability of the state's food and fibre producers.

Structure of the response

The Government response uses five key themes to address the recommendations made in the report. These themes serve as a basis for delineating policy efforts across the numerous portfolio areas which influence the development of the agricultural workforce. These themes are:

1. Industry development
2. Business models
3. Workforce capacity development
4. Education
5. Image

Recommendations responses – summary

Category	Count
Support	15
Support in principle	16
Support in part	4
Do not support	4

INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Key issues:

The report highlights that strategies employed across the agriculture industry to attract and retain skilled people vary widely from sector to sector, and that government is well-placed to address this by supporting knowledge-sharing and strategic alignment across industry. The report also notes that there is scope for government to refine the way it interacts with industry, both directly through extension and support programs, and indirectly through infrastructure provision and the removal of red tape.

Recommendation (INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT)	Position and response
<p>Recommendation 1:</p> <p>That the state government convene a ‘round table’ with industry peak bodies to discuss the findings and recommendations of this Inquiry.</p> <p>The goal of the ‘round table’ would be to emerge with a plan for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ongoing cooperation including an annual summit hosted by government b. Provision of a more accurate and industry relevant set of data to the government on an annual basis, such as information about wages; age of workforce; number of graduates entering the industry; and proportion of workforce entering from outside the sector c. Forecasting future workforce shortages and development needs to ensure accurate and effective planning for recruitment and training d. Identifying opportunities for coinvestment in priority action areas or in joint industry–government pilot projects. 	<p>Support.</p> <p>The Government supports the recommendation of the report that industry must take the lead on addressing issues of attraction and retention of people to agriculture. This is consistent with the Government’s recently-introduced Industry Participation Model, which will increase industry leadership in the vocational education and training system. To support this, the Government will facilitate a roundtable across industry sectors on the priority outcomes from this report, with a strong youth representation.</p> <p>Where Recommendations focus on the need for industry’s lead involvement, the Government will take those recommendations to the roundtable for discussion with industry.</p> <p>The specific Recommendations are:</p> <p>Recommendation 1, Recommendation 3, Recommendation 4, Recommendation 11, Recommendation 18, Recommendation 23, Recommendation 24, Recommendation 35, Recommendation 36, Recommendation 37.</p> <p>The roundtable will provide a forum for industry to consider the merits of relevant recommendations and other priority areas that it acknowledges responsibility for delivering. Greater sharing of information and strengthened relationships will enable government to support industry to lead responses to critical issues.</p>

Recommendation 12:

That the state government investigate current liability and compliance requirements on farmers who wish to allow young people onto their farms for mentoring or work experience purposes with a view to removing unnecessary impediments and providing accurate information to farmers regarding the requirements.

Support in principle.

The Government notes that there are already arrangements in place relating to students undertaking workplace learning, including on farms that provide coverage for employers, including farmers.

DEECD provides support for workplace learning through the provision of coverage for all work experience and structured workplace learning students under the DEECD WorkSafe Insurance Policy and the extension of public liability insurance for workplace learning arrangements entered into by principals of government schools. Similar arrangements are available to cover mentoring programs for school students.

Beyond this, the Government believes that making compliance requirements clear is the best way to give farmers certainty about their obligations and confidence when considering whether to bring young people on farm.

The Victorian WorkCover Authority (VWA) has developed guidance material targeting the Agriculture sector and continues to seek to raise the awareness of good occupational health and safety practices, which is available at worksafe.vic.gov.au.

To support teachers in assisting young workers to enter the workforce, both the VWA and the Victorian Applied Learning Association developed the Safe-T1 website. This website contains invaluable teaching and learning resources to improve the occupational health and safety awareness of young people entering the workforce.

The Government also notes that there is an opportunity for industry peak bodies to work in this space, and that the Victorian Farmers Federation has considered publishing summary material for farmers on these subjects in the past.

<p>Recommendation 16:</p> <p>That the state government review the take-up of current programs that provide support for young farmers through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stamp duty exemption through the Assistance to Young Farmers program • Young Farmers First Farm Grant • Young Farmers Finance Scheme. <p>The purpose of the review would be to determine whether these programs should be expanded or include other elements. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further tax breaks for land purchase • Cow leasing or • Sharefarming. 	<p>Support.</p> <p>The Government has completed its review of the First Farm Grant and stamp duty exemption programs. The Young Farmers Finance Scheme is subject to periodic review and refinement by the Rural Finance Corporation.</p> <p>One of the principles of these reviews is to identify means of improving the efficacy of these schemes, although the options presented in the recommendation are not considered in detail. The findings of these reviews and other options for supporting young farmers will be considered by Government in the work undertaken as part of its response to Recommendation 17, and more broadly as part of its ongoing policy development process.</p>
<p>Recommendation 33:</p> <p>That the state government ensure an ongoing strong working relationship between the Department of Primary Industries and all young farmer groups representing the next generation of young farmers.</p>	<p>Support.</p> <p>The Government acknowledges the value of connectivity between all young farmer and rural youth groups representing the next generation of rural leaders, and commits the Department of Primary Industries to strengthen relationships with these groups.</p> <p>As part of this commitment the Government will facilitate a Young Farmer State Committee, driven by representatives from key groups for the next generation of young people in food and fibre. Representatives will have the opportunity to meet to discuss strategic alignment, goals and the sharing of knowledge to strengthen and support the currently fragmented young farmer groups in Victoria. There will be an opportunity for this group to shape the way young farmer groups coordinate activities between state, regional and local levels.</p>

<p>Recommendation 34: That the state government support development of a mentoring model for Victorian Young Farmers, to assist them in growing their membership.</p>	<p>Support. The Government recognises the important role of mentoring in a rural context to facilitate the transfer of information between generations. As part of the Government’s \$1 million election commitment to Support the Next Generation of Food and Fibre Producers, Victorian Young Farmers (VYF) was provided with \$400,000 of funding to reinvigorate the association. The VYF are working with the Government to develop a mentoring model specific to their needs. Access to the program will be open to all members of the Victorian Young Farmers.</p>
<p>Recommendation 38: That the state government work with rural communities and other levels of government to support the development of appropriate infrastructure and services.</p>	<p>Support. The Government recognises the importance of sound infrastructure and services in attracting people to rural and regional communities. The Government uses a number of measures to increase regional and rural liveability, the centrepiece of which is the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund, which is designed to empower communities to make decisions about investment in their area. Through the Regional Growth Fund and complementary measures such as the Good Move campaign, the Government is committed to supporting the quality of life available in regional and rural Victoria.</p>

Recommendation 39:

That the state government examine the delivery of extension services in Victoria with the aim of identifying gaps in services. In particular, the state government should examine the following elements of extension service delivery in Victoria:

- Provision of productivity advice to smaller, lower income farms which can be an entry point into the industry
- Development of strategies to assist farmers to deal with the volatility of agriculture
- Identification of new diversification opportunities utilising available infrastructure such as power and water
- Provision of funding for on farm advice and support from external providers.

Support in part.

The Department of Primary Industries has a well-established framework for directing extension activities which targets areas where potential productivity improvements are greatest and where private extension services are not available.

DPI practice change and emergency management services are designed to:

- accelerate the adoption of relevant technologies and practices;
- increase agricultural communities' ability to respond to change; and
- deliver effective natural disaster emergency response and recovery.

Reflecting the Government's priority of boosting productivity within key sectors, DPI services are targeted at those producers who want to grow their businesses; these include younger farmers that are new entrants to food and fibre production.

DPI designs its services based upon market research to determine the desired rate and scope of change required. The Department partners with stakeholders including funders, industry organisations and private providers, consistent with its Better Services to Farmers Strategy.

DPI focuses on funding where there is public benefit with industry funding supporting industry benefits, and will continue to refine its extension services with the aim of providing the appropriately-targeted support to industry.

BUSINESS MODELS

Key points

An increasing proportion of the next generation of food and fibre producers will not work their family's farm; rather, they will be employed as part of another owner's farm enterprise, or will seek to buy a separate farm business and expand it over time. The report demonstrates that the transition to these models of farm ownership will require the adoption of new business structures and asset-sharing arrangements, many of which currently only have limited uptake in the farming community. There is a role for government here in understanding the business models available to new farmers and making that information more widely available.

Recommendation (BUSINESS MODELS)	Position and response
<p>Recommendation 17:</p> <p>That the state government undertake evaluation of innovative lending schemes and farm finance products designed to support young farmers in particular as well as new entrants to the industry. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equity partnerships that facilitate progress towards farm ownership • Vendor finance models that allow for equity contributions (cows, machinery etc.) to be combined with bank loans and external investment and that include tax breaks • Brokerage arrangements to facilitate lease agreements and which provide incentives to farmers seeking retirement to lease their land by taxing rental payments at lower rates. 	<p>Support.</p> <p>The Government recognises that new entrants to agriculture will be seeking a range of alternative business models and financing solutions which best further their goal of farm ownership. The Government also notes that innovative agricultural finance products have potential to create pathways for new entrants to the industry. Accordingly, the Government, in partnership with industry and the Rural Finance Corporation, will conduct analysis of a range of innovative financial products and examine the scope and benefits of these products for the sector. This will include a detailed analysis of the business transition and expansion opportunities created by farm leasing, and whether promotion of this and other novel financial instruments (such as vendor finance models) is merited.</p>
<p>Recommendation 18:</p> <p>That the state government support and promote the establishment of a system that matches young people wishing to enter farming with older farmers who are willing to undertake collaborative business or employment ventures including mentoring assistance on their property.</p>	<p>Support in principle.</p> <p>The Government endorses the report's conclusion that asset-sharing and farm leasing arrangements can be stepping-stones for farmers seeking to scale up their businesses. Further, collaboration with experienced farmers can potentially provide support and benefits to less experienced industry entrants.</p> <p>The Government notes that sectors within the industry have experimented</p>

	<p>with mentoring programs, and that opportunities exist for the industry to benefit from information-sharing on the subject. Accordingly the Government will facilitate a discussion on collaborative business models at the industry roundtable (as outlined in the response to Recommendation 1).</p> <p>The Government will continue to support projects under the election commitment to Support the Next Generation of Young Food and Fibre Producers, which seeks to develop closer connections across generations in the sector.</p>
<p>Recommendation 19:</p> <p>That the state government, in order to encourage young people into agriculture, investigate and promote alternative forms of farm business ownership to young people, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share options • Incremental ownership • Family farms • Separating land ownership from business ownership. <p>Research and analysis into models operating in similar farming countries and that provide opportunities for attraction of young farmers may need to be undertaken.</p>	<p>Support.</p> <p>As the traditional model of inheriting the family farm becomes less available to young farmers, the Government recognises the importance of highlighting alternative pathways into the industry. As part of this, the Government, in partnership with industry and the Rural Finance Corporation, will investigate alternative forms of farm business ownership and their potential applications in Victoria. Following the outcomes of this work, the Government will work with industry to consider further steps to promulgate the findings of the investigation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 21:</p> <p>That the state government consolidate its efforts towards increasing awareness of the importance of succession planning in the agricultural sector through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the introduction of succession planning into tertiary education subjects • Increasing funding incentives for succession planning, including conducting campaigns promoting the importance of succession planning, delivered by the Department of Primary Industries • Introducing a succession planning element to the Department of Primary Industries' presence at agricultural field days. 	<p>Not supported.</p> <p>The Government recognises the importance of succession planning in farm businesses and farm families, but notes that the primary responsibility for promoting succession planning rests with industry and private financial services enterprises.</p> <p>Industry is best placed to promote the importance of skill development, including driving the uptake of succession planning and building human resources management capability. The Government will work with industry as part of the new Industry Participation Model to ensure that industry is able to identify appropriate skills sets and courses that include human resources and business management competencies.</p>

	<p>The Government will also continue to highlight existing succession planning services to farmers, including private consultants and information provided by Rural Financial Counsellors.</p>
<p>Recommendation 22: That the state government include a succession plan as a requirement for any financial assistance (other than disaster assistance) which it provides to farmers</p>	<p>Not supported. Succession planning is an important topic for the benefit of both the business and the family, but primary responsibility for effective succession planning remains with the farm business, and with industry to promote. Succession planning is not necessarily a relevant pre-requisite for government financial assistance, such as access to the Young Farmers Finance Scheme and the young farmer stamp duty exemption.</p>

WORKFORCE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Key points:

Modern food and fibre production demands an increasingly sophisticated skill set, as farm businesses strive to improve productivity through the adoption of new technologies and management practices. To build a workforce capable of achieving this, industry needs to use sophisticated approaches to workforce management which maximise the potential of its human capital. The Government will seek to promote this transition, both in partnership with industry and by supporting better distribution of the successful pockets of high-quality workforce management practices which already exist in the sector.

Recommendation (WORKFORCE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT)	Position and response
<p>Recommendation 10:</p> <p>That the state government continue to fund programs which allow students to gain industry experience in regional areas.</p>	<p>Support in principle.</p> <p>Victorian schools have the autonomy to make decisions regarding curriculum programs and implementation approaches, including relevant industry experiences for students. This is an important role for school councils to show leadership and assert its community’s priorities in the education provided.</p> <p>As noted in the report, schools such as Murrayville Community College and Kaniva College are supported with school specialisation grants to provide agriculture focused curriculum programs. There is also scope for schools to deliver agriculture-related programs by partnering with local industry, an approach which has been used with success by Tyrell College.</p> <p>While the Government is not in a position to provide funding additional to that already in place, there is an opportunity to showcase the benefits of partnerships between industry and schools in increasing student engagement.</p> <p>(See Recommendation 9 for further information)</p>

<p>Recommendation 20</p> <p>That the state government in partnership with industry develop training courses explaining the different business models that exist in agriculture.</p>	<p>Support in principle.</p> <p>Under the new Industry Participation Model, government will assist industry to negotiate the development of appropriate training courses that meet the needs of the agricultural sector. This includes supporting industry to articulate the business management skill sets that industry requires to relevant training providers.</p> <p>Industry should also work with the AgriFood Industry Skills Council to ensure that training packages reflect the needs of industry. The Government will consider any further action here in the context of the outcomes of Recommendation 19, which will assess the potential effectiveness of alternative agricultural business models.</p>
<p>Recommendation 24:</p> <p>That the state government support agricultural industries to establish information and support programs in order to enhance the professional recruitment and retention capabilities of farmers through sound human resource management. The People in Dairy program provides a good model.</p>	<p>Support in principle.</p> <p>The government notes the success of the People in Dairy model in developing workforce management skills amongst farm business managers, and further notes that this highlights the links between capability development and industry leadership of the skill development process. Wider implementation of this model needs to be driven by industry. The government will facilitate a discussion on this topic at the industry roundtable (as outlined in Recommendation 1).</p> <p>Through the new Industry Participation Model, government will assist agricultural industries to partner with training providers to ensure that skills sets in business and human resources management are accessible and tailored to the needs of the sector.</p>

<p>Recommendation 25:</p> <p>That the state government work in partnership with peak industry bodies to promote awareness of farmer health needs and work safety. This would ensure increased knowledge of farmer health and work safety in the agricultural workforce.</p>	<p>Support.</p> <p>The Department of Health regularly engages with primary, community and mental health services and has established working relationships with peak bodies, academic organisations and consumer and social advocacy organisations across rural and regional Victoria. The findings of this Inquiry will be communicated across the healthcare sector through regular engagement processes with Departmental regional offices.</p> <p>The Department will continue to ensure that farmer health issues are addressed through the Departmentally-funded rural Primary Care Partnerships, which aim to improve access to services for communities through better service coordination and integrated health promotion.</p> <p>The Government will also continue to explore ways to promote farmer health issues within industry, including through closer integration with peak bodies via the industry round table.</p>
<p>Recommendation 27:</p> <p>That the state government encourage Local Learning and Employment Networks to identify how they can achieve better links between the farming sector and education and training providers through this network.</p>	<p>Support.</p> <p>The Victorian Government funds Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) to provide secondary students with careers education on opportunities across the economy. DEECD will continue to encourage LLENs to explore ways in which links between the farming sector and education and training provision can be facilitated and improved.</p>

<p>Recommendation 28:</p> <p>That the state government provide funding of \$10,000 to support development of a business case for the establishment of an ‘Agricultural Learning Centre’ in rural or regional Victoria. The centre would complement research and education institutions through provision of industry showcasing / guest speaker forums, work experience opportunities, training and scholarships.</p>	<p>Not supported.</p> <p>The Government does not support the concept that a single agricultural learning centre will provide the best option to deliver research and education opportunities. An alternative mechanism to achieve the outcomes sought by this recommendation is to continue the showcasing of agricultural research and education through utilising the Government’s existing investments in world-class research and training centres around regional Victoria including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Centre for Dairy Research and Development at DPI Ellinbank. • \$2.85 million investment in the Australian Grains Genebank centre at DPI Horsham. • Grains Innovation Park at DPI Horsham, including the Australian Temperate Field Crops Collection, and the DPI Plant Breeding Centre Farm. • Centre for Sheep Meat Excellence at DPI Hamilton. • National Centre for Equine Education in Wangaratta. <p>These centres, and DPI more broadly, provide a range of opportunities for industry sectors through work experience, guest speakers, training education and extension programs (such as ‘Best Wool, Best Lamb’ and ‘Target 10’). Having multiple centres across the state enables greater access by producers.</p>
<p>Recommendation 30:</p> <p>That the state government review ways in which sea experience can be acquired for a young person wanting to be a coxswain, for example the possibility of including time spent maintaining a boat in dock. This should be done while acknowledging the importance of sea experience, in particular in regard to safety.</p>	<p>Support in principle</p> <p>The Government, through Transport Safety Victoria (TSV), is involved with the National Marine Safety Committee's review of Part D of the National Standard for Commercial Vessels. This Part prescribes training and qualification requirements for all Australian domestic marine certificates of competency and includes requirements for sea time experience to obtain commercial certificates of competency such as coxswain certificates.</p>

	<p>TSV is engaged with industry and other marine safety jurisdictions to explore ways in which sea experience can be acquired for a young person wanting to be a coxswain (or obtain any other type of marine certificate of competency) and that this is being done acknowledging the importance of sea experience, in particular in regard to safety.</p>
<p>Recommendation 31: That the state government, through Marine Safety Victoria, consult with the commercial fishing industry to identify and remove any anomalies in acquiring formal qualifications.</p>	<p>Support in principle Representatives of Transport Safety Victoria (TSV) are currently engaged in discussions with all other state jurisdictions and the designated single national maritime regulator, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), on the development and implementation of the National System for Commercial Vessel Safety. It is proposed that the National System will commence in 2013. One of the principle objectives of National System is to reduce barriers to entry into the maritime industry at all levels and to maximise the portability of labour across the country. As a part of this development and implementation process, the systems and standards for formal qualifications in the maritime industry including those for fishermen, are being reviewed, updated and rationalised.</p> <p>The question of the final assessment of candidates for the issue of a certificate of competency is under review by the national reference group undertaking the development of the revised certification standards. This reference group includes fishing industry representation. Once the National System is operational this will become an AMSA responsibility. TSV will still engage with stakeholders but policy decisions will be made by the national regulator and as a state jurisdiction, TSV's role will be to influence the national agenda and administer the policy.</p>
<p>Recommendation 32: That the state government fund the development of an agriculture 'skills passport' or 'green card' that identifies the holder's qualifications and skill levels irrespective of provider.</p>	<p>Support in principle. The Government notes the potential of an agriculture skills passport to facilitate the movement of labour within the agriculture sector. However, development of such a passport should be led by industry. There are</p>

	<p>opportunities for industry to adopt models which identify qualifications and skills that replicate successful existing models.</p> <p>A recent example includes a partnership between industry and training providers in Mildura to create a Food and Beverage Passport – the passport describes a set of competencies that are required for employment in Olive, Wine and Beverage enterprises in Mildura.</p> <p>Through the industry roundtable (as outlined in Recommendation 1), Government will test the demand for industry-led development of a skills passport.</p>
<p>Recommendation 35: That the state government examine the Young Dairy Development Program with a view to facilitating application of such a development program to other food and fibre production sectors.</p>	<p>Support in principle. With reference to Recommendation 33, the Young Dairy Development Program will be one of the key young farmer groups represented on the Young Farmer State Committee.</p> <p>This committee will identify and discuss opportunities to support development programs across industry sectors.</p> <p>In addition to the Government’s facilitation role, it will be imperative to obtain industry buy-in at a regional level to support the coordinated activities of these groups.</p> <p>In this context, the government will facilitate a discussion on industry’s involvement in supporting young farmer networking groups at the industry roundtable (as outlined in Recommendation 1).</p>
<p>Recommendation 36: That the state government provide funding support for mentoring programs developed by industry peak bodies.</p>	<p>Support in principle. The Government supports the concept of mentoring to develop the next generation of rural leaders; however, this is primarily a role for industry.</p> <p>There is an opportunity for the Young Farmer State Committee to look at mentoring structures as a priority and work with industry directly to facilitate matching young people with suitable mentors.</p> <p>Through the industry roundtable (as outlined in Recommendation 1), government will facilitate a discussion on mentoring.</p>

Recommendation 37:

That the state government provide support funding for networking programs developed by farming sector organisations as an incentive for bodies to formalise these activities.

Support in principle.

Industry organisations should take the lead in funding networking programs. Industry investment in such initiatives can provide government with a clear indication of the support and priority given to such initiatives. The Government already provides funding support for networking activities through the election commitment to Support the Next Generation of Food and Fibre Producers. Further to this, the Government will better link existing networking groups through the Young Farmer State Committee.

The Government also funds business leaders in rural and regional areas to engage in networking and knowledge-sharing activities through the Regional Community Leadership Program.

Additional support for separate networking activities will be determined as appropriate on a case-by-case basis, and by the ability of industry to fund this work.

The Government will facilitate a discussion on industry sponsorship of sector based networking programs at the industry roundtable (as outlined in Recommendation 1).

EDUCATION

Key points:

For many people considering a career in agriculture, the decision to do so is influenced by their exposure to the sector while at school age. The report highlights the decline in agricultural subjects at the secondary level across Victoria in recent years, and notes that industry involvement will be required if the field is to be revitalised within the school curriculum. There is a wide range of forms of agricultural education available, from dedicated subjects to mentoring and school-based apprenticeships. By developing closer connections with the education sector, industry has an opportunity to create clear pathways for a new generation of young people entering agriculture.

Recommendation (EDUCATION)	Position and response
<p>Recommendation 2:</p> <p>That, in recognition of the important role of careers advisers in secondary schools, the state government appoint a rural industries careers adviser within the Department of Primary Industries or Primary Skills Victoria. The role of the rural industries careers adviser would be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote agricultural careers to students • Have direct contact with schools to build awareness of the range of opportunities in agriculture • Be involved in careers expos and field days • Educate careers advisers about the merits of agriculture and associated professions and opportunities that are available • Provide direct links for agriculture with the Careers Education Association of Victoria • Identify farm advocate speakers for schools • Work with industry to promote careers and training pathways. 	<p>Support.</p> <p>The Government acknowledges the importance of this recommendation as a possible solution to increasing the quality of career advice provided to young people about opportunities in agricultural and rural industries.</p> <p>There is a need to ensure that duplication of current activities and overlap is avoided, and that existing frameworks and career advisory resources are used where possible.</p> <p>Rural industries careers adviser</p> <p>The Government will appoint a rural industries careers adviser to work with Victorian schools to highlight opportunities for students considering careers in agriculture, and to promote effective models of agricultural education currently employed by other schools across the State.</p> <p>There is opportunity for agricultural industries to engage with the adviser, particularly in the supply, development or promotion of career development resources, and involvement in other opportunities to showcase the broad range of careers that are available across the agricultural sector.</p> <p>Industry leadership</p> <p>The credibility of information about career opportunities in rural industries will be enhanced if promotion of those opportunities is</p>

	<p>primarily driven by industry. Peak industry bodies have the opportunity to inform young people and new entrant farmers regarding career opportunities in their sector. A number of other industries are already demonstrating this type of leadership and incorporating the skills and careers agenda into industry events.</p> <p>Government recommends that peak industry bodies liaise directly with producers of careers information resources frequently used by careers practitioners and schools, including myfuture and the Job Guide (DEEWR), Youth Central (Office for Youth –DHS) and the existing careers resources on DEECD website, so that appropriate links may be made to relevant industry resources.</p> <p>Government will also support peak industry bodies to leverage existing direct contact channels to careers practitioners and schools, such as the Career Education Association of Victoria.</p> <p>New one-stop-shop website</p> <p>Recognising the need for better information about training and career opportunities, the government announced a new one-stop-shop website as part of its new Industry Participation Model in March 2012. The Government is committed to working with peak agricultural bodies to ensure that agricultural career and training pathway information is accessible via the new website which is scheduled to be launched by the end of 2012.</p> <p>This website will provide information for students and school leavers, their families, teachers and career advisers regarding career choices and training opportunities in agriculture related courses and careers.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: That the state government encourage peak industry bodies to increase their communication with high school careers advisers, to ensure information about career pathways and career opportunities in agriculture remains relevant,</p>	<p>Support. The Government has already committed to working with peak industry bodies (for example, the Victorian Farmers Federation and Dairy Australia) to ensure that agricultural career and training</p>

<p>up-to-date and easily accessible. This process could include providing careers advisers with on-farm experience.</p>	<p>pathway information is up-to-date and accessible via the new one-stop-shop skills website.</p> <p>One of the key objectives of the Victorian Government's further engagement with peak bodies through the industry roundtable is to seek ways to facilitate better connections between industry and education providers.</p> <p>Careers practitioners should be provided with up-to-date, accessible information on career pathways and career opportunities in the agricultural industry. Industry bodies should also liaise directly with schools and the Career Education Association of Victoria.</p> <p>Careers practitioners and schools frequently use careers information resources including myfuture, the Job Guide, Youth Central and DEECD. Peak industry bodies should liaise directly with the content producers of these careers information resources to ensure that the information about career pathways and career opportunities in agriculture is relevant, up-to-date and easily accessible.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7:</p> <p>That the state government, in conjunction with students, develop an innovative online education tool aimed at high school students.</p>	<p>Support in principle.</p> <p>DEECD already provides a range of resources on agriculture and horticulture that schools and students are able to access online via the website, FUSE (Find, Use and Share quality Education resources) and the Ultranet.</p> <p>DEECD accepts the intent of the recommendation and will continue to provide high quality digital learning objects to secondary school students. The Government also notes that there have been recent developments in industry-led development of online resources that may provide accessible learning resources for teachers.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8:</p> <p>That the state government investigate what the current impediments to teaching agricultural education in Victorian schools are with a view to implementing measures to deal with those.</p>	<p>Support in principle.</p> <p>This recommendation has been specifically considered as part of a separate inquiry by the Education and Training Committee's Inquiry into Agricultural Education and Training in Victoria. To address any potential duplication of investigative work, the</p>

	<p>Government will await any recommendations regarding identified ‘impediments’ from the aforementioned Education and Training Committee Inquiry, and will consider the need for further investigations at that time.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9: That the state government fund the expansion of agricultural curriculum into more secondary schools. The goals of such an initiative would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure of students to the industry while they are making career choices • Provision of opportunities for meaningful farm and sector-related experiences as part of the school curriculum • Promotion of agriculture as a focus for school camps and excursions endorsed as educational experiences by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development • Targeting of local qualified teachers to become teachers of agriculture-related courses. 	<p>Support in part.</p> <p>Secondary School Curriculum</p> <p>Victorian schools have the autonomy to make decisions regarding curriculum programs and implementation approaches. This is an important role for school councils to show leadership and assert local priorities in education.</p> <p>In relation to the goal of exposing students to industry whilst making career choices, many individual schools, clusters and networks already have strategic partnerships with industry. Educators use these partnerships to support the design and delivery of curriculum and demonstrate to students how contemporary areas of mathematics and science are applied in the workplace.</p> <p>In relation to the goal of providing meaningful experiences, integrated with the relevant curriculum content, schools provide tailored excursions, environmental programs, community gardens, and Science and Mathematics Specialist Centre visits; meeting the needs and interest of students within their local contexts, and beyond.</p> <p>As noted in the report, schools such as Murrayville Community College and Kaniva College are supported with school specialisation grants to provide agriculture focused curriculum programs. Other schools such as Tyrell College have successfully partnered with local industry to assist delivery of agriculture-related programs.</p> <p>DEECD will continue to support schools to develop their own programs while ensuring every student has access to the learning that is essential.</p>

VET in Schools

Students in schools also have access to a range of opportunities through Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS) to pursue studies in Agriculture at Certificate II to Certificate IV levels, which may also form part of a student's Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) or Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) qualification. Participation in these courses is funded through a school's Student Resource Package (SRP) budget with additional targeted funding for VETiS which also includes an equity component for schools in rural areas. Decisions about the provision of particular curriculum options (including Certificates in Agriculture) rest with individual schools. In some cases schools may cluster together for the provision of programs.

Schools provide advice to students when pursuing career choices at the local level. Where the schools lack the teacher expertise to deliver these certificates under the auspice of a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), they are funded through the SRP and VETiS for the capacity to purchase delivery direct from a RTO for their students.

Promotion of agriculture to the school system to increase student participation is the responsibility of industry bodies and can be an important component of the establishment and development of partnerships with selected schools or clusters of schools. These partnerships may also include schools from the non-government sector.

Agriculture teachers

Primary school teachers are appointed as classroom teachers and are qualified to teach most curriculum options. Secondary teachers have specialist curriculum teaching areas based on academic and teacher training qualifications; however, teacher training provides all teachers with the pedagogical skills to enable the broad application of their profession.

	<p>Decisions about how teaching staff are allocated their teaching responsibilities on a year-to-year basis are made by principals, reflecting the demands of school communities. Those in the community can seek increases in the agriculture component of the curriculum through their school council. The devolution of responsibility, authority and accountability to the school level, including the selection of teaching staff and allocation of teaching responsibilities, has significantly increased the flexibility available to principals in managing their human and financial resources. In exercising this flexibility, prime consideration remains the delivery of the curriculum program by teachers with the necessary capability.</p>
<p>Recommendation 11: That the state government establish a rural industries mentoring scheme, in collaboration with schools and rural and regional industries. The goals of the scheme would be to provide education support for the next generation of farmers from an older generation with a wealth of knowledge and experience in the industry.</p>	<p>Support in principle. The Government acknowledges the ageing workforce in agriculture and the need for knowledge transfer between generations.</p> <p>A mentoring scheme may be appropriate as part of promotional activities to increase student participation. A range of industry led models are available; activities such as these are the primary responsibility of industry bodies, and can be an important component of the establishment and development of partnerships with selected schools or clusters of schools.</p> <p>There may also be opportunities for farmers and training providers that deliver agricultural training to explore opportunities for creating mentoring schemes for existing students.</p> <p>Through the industry roundtable, Government will facilitate a discussion on rural industries mentoring (as outlined in Recommendation 1).</p>

<p>Recommendation 13:</p> <p>That the state government provide funding to package the Mansfield agribusiness program for consideration and adoption by other schools; for a facilitator to be responsible for that role and to assist in its broader establishment; and to meet the costs associated with running such a program for schools willing to take it on.</p>	<p>Support in principle.</p> <p>Consultation will take place including with the Country Education Project and the Business Working with Education Foundation to investigate opportunities to support the packaging of the Mansfield agribusiness program and provide a resource for schools to utilise, noting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools have the autonomy to make decisions regarding curriculum programs and implementation approaches; • potential exists for a developed model to be published through FUSE and the Ultranet • the current environment of fiscal restraint.
<p>Recommendation 14:</p> <p>That the state government do a costing study on the introduction of effective reforms to the agricultural education approach in Victoria. The costing study would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of agricultural high schools in Victoria, based on the model currently operating in Western Australia • Consideration of the cost of introducing further agricultural components into the curriculum at a range of high schools particularly in rural and regional areas • Development of currently underutilised resources such as the Dookie Campus of the University of Melbourne • The need for a role such as Director for Agricultural Education as exists in Western Australia. 	<p>Support.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will undertake a costing study on potential reforms to the agricultural education system in Victoria. The study's terms of reference will focus on the areas identified in the Rural and Regional Committee's report, and will examine opportunities to utilise existing resources more effectively to deliver agricultural education in Victoria. In particular, the study will test the feasibility of establishing a specialist school for agricultural education at the year 11 and 12 levels.</p>
<p>Recommendation 15:</p> <p>That the state government develop stronger links between the Department of Primary Industries and the education and training sector through allocation of a designated senior officer to this role, such as a Director for Agricultural Education who would be able to communicate with the rural sector and have a</p>	<p>Support in part.</p> <p>The Government is committed to creating stronger partnerships with the agricultural education sector. The new Industry Participation Model is based on direct partnership with employers, industry associations and other government departments.</p>

<p>strong understanding of on- and off-farm training as well as other key state and federal programs and services that would be of benefit.</p>	<p>While specific industry advisory arrangements through the new model are still being finalised, the strengthened relationship between DPI and DEECD and peak industry associations as a critical component of the new model will deliver the linkage objectives of this recommendation without the need to create a dedicated executive role.</p> <p>The new model also positions industry to shape training market outcomes by facilitating more direct relationships between industry and training providers.</p>
<p>Recommendation 26:</p> <p>That the state government encourage greater collaboration between the education and health sectors to ensure (i) that agricultural education providers add health components to their courses and that (ii) health education providers recognise that farmer health has unique characteristics that make it a group worthy of particular focus and specific service delivery.</p>	<p>Support.</p> <p>The Victorian Government recognises that farmer health has specific characteristics that merit targeted policy action. The Department of Health works with tertiary education providers to support the integration of emerging skilling requirements in health courses and curriculum, including the Council of Victorian Health Deans, the Council of Senior Vocational Education and Training and the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council.</p> <p>The Department of Health will bring the Inquiry’s recommendations to the attention of health education providers, particularly those in rural Victoria, to ensure that health courses address the unique health needs of farmers. The Department of Health recognises the importance of a broader and more integrated approach to farmer health skills in the health curriculum and will facilitate rural needs in collaboration with DPI as required.</p> <p>More broadly, the Government will work with industry as part of the new Industry Participation Model to ensure that industry is able to negotiate the development of appropriate training courses that meet the needs of the agricultural sector. This includes supporting industry to articulate those relevant units of competency or skill sets</p>

	<p>related to health that industry requires to relevant training providers.</p> <p>The Government also notes that industry peak bodies can utilise their extensive networks to influence outcomes in this area.</p>
<p>Recommendation 29:</p> <p>That the state government consider implementation of an ‘Agriculture Rural Bonded Scholarship’ for students undertaking agricultural science degrees or higher level vocational qualifications. The scholarship would bond the participant to working in a rural context for a period of time in an extension function or as a careers adviser within a secondary school in order to create a pool of careers advisers who have a strong agricultural focus.</p>	<p>Not supported.</p> <p>While bonded scholarships have been used in the past in Victoria to recruit students to the teaching profession and employment in the government school sector, they were phased out in favour of promotion of teaching as a career and the implementation of initiatives which relied on financial incentives. In addition, from the 1990s the Victorian government school system evolved from a centralised to a highly devolved system in which recruitment decisions are made by principals. The use of bonded scholarships was incompatible with a devolved system.</p> <p>In terms of a direct application to agricultural science graduates working in regional contexts, bonding is not regarded as a positive recruitment strategy. Government suggests that industry consider whether it would be possible to implement a range of rural attraction strategies as outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DEECD has developed the Student Teacher Practicum Scheme which is available to assist pre-service teachers with their placements to cover accommodation, travel and out of pocket expenses. This is used as an attraction strategy to enable the pre-service teacher to experience a rural placement and influence future application for employment decisions. • In addition to employment opportunities, DEECD also provide a number of attraction and retention scholarships to attract teachers to rural and remote Victoria. Within the scholarships, designated remote areas would attract the maximum payment.

	<p>Careers advisers in schools are employed by principals in accordance with a school's workforce plan and their salary paid from the school's global budget. Therefore, graduates would have to be matched with the needs of individual schools and could not be imposed. There is an option to provide these careers advisers as supernumerary staff paid outside the global budget, but this would be very expensive. It should also be noted that careers advisers are meant to be impartial and provide unbiased careers information, advice and guidance.</p>
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IMAGE

Key points:

The report notes that in order to attract a thriving and skilled workforce, agriculture needs to project an image of an industry which people can forge a rewarding career in. Primary responsibility for doing so lies with the industry itself; the Inquiry's report confirms this, and that many of the challenges that exist in this regard are not unique to agriculture (for example, negative media attention). The report suggests that if farmers are seeking an inflow of new skills and abilities to the industry, they need to start promoting agriculture as an attractive and rewarding career.

The Government acknowledges the need for highlighting a positive image of agriculture, and notes that the best way to improve an industry's image is to improve its productivity and profitability – and hence the opportunities it offers its participants. The Government seeks to support industry in increasing its productivity and profitability, enhancing its attractiveness to young farmers. Information and communication material from the Department of Primary Industries strives to promote a positive, and diverse, image of the industry, and highlight the range of careers along the agriculture supply chain.

The Government will look for further opportunities to engage with young people on the subject in appropriate ways, including interactive communications. The Government will also promote positive messages as told by industry and farmers through the GROW campaign.

Recognising the need to promote the place as well as the people, the Government promotes the lifestyle opportunities of regional Victoria through the Good Move campaign. Promoting the regions will enhance their attractiveness to those considering a career in agriculture (both on- and off-farm).

Recommendation	Position and response
<p>Recommendation 4:</p> <p>That the state government partner with peak industry bodies to promote a positive image of agriculture, including reference to skill sets, salary packages, technology and lifestyle. The funding should be directed at:</p>	<p>Support.</p> <p>The Government supports industry actively promoting a positive image of agriculture and the Committee's conclusion that industry must lead its own self-promotion.</p> <p>The Government believes the best way to assist industry to attract people to a career in agriculture is to support the productivity and profitability of individual sectors.</p> <p>The Government has invested an additional \$61.4 million over four years in research, development and technology in the Growing Food and Fibre initiative, with \$15.7 million ongoing in subsequent years.</p> <p>This builds on the Government's commitment to increase the productivity and profitability of Victoria's key food and fibre sectors.</p>

	<p>The Government will commit to facilitating a discussion with industry on industry promotion at the industry roundtable (as outlined in Recommendation 1).</p>
<p>a. Supporting roles for ‘ambassadors’ or ‘champions’ to reach young people directly with a view to establishing an ongoing ‘ambassadors’ program to go into high schools and speak to students directly</p>	<p>Support.</p> <p>The Government acknowledges the role of ambassadors and champions in promoting a positive image of agriculture. Industry has a successful history of engaging high-profile ambassadors to promote its products. These are important roles, and there is potential to use them in the promotion of agriculture to potential new entrants to the industry.</p> <p>The Government recognises the importance of rural ambassadors through its longstanding relationship with the Royal Agriculture of Society Rural Ambassadors Award.</p> <p>In addition, through the Government’s election commitment to Support the Next Generation of Food and Fibre Producers, \$1 million of funding has been made available to the Victorian Young Farmers association. Both programs identify young, passionate people capable of being spokespeople in schools. A partnership approach between DPI and DEECD will be used to explore supporting young ambassadors speaking to high schools about careers in agriculture.</p>
<p>b. A Young Farmer of the Year award</p>	<p>Support in principle.</p> <p>The Government supports reward and recognition of young people making a positive contribution to agriculture and the image of the industry. However the establishment of a new young farmer award is not supported, as there already exists a number of Government and industry sponsored award programs at state and national levels which acknowledges young farmers; for example, the Kondinin Group Young Farmer of the Year Award, the VFF Apprentice of the Year Award, and the RASV Rural Ambassador Award.</p> <p>As part of the Government’s \$1 million election commitment to Support the Next Generation of Food and Fibre Producers, the</p>

	<p>GROW Your Food and Fibre Career website was created. To alert young farmers to existing opportunities offered through reward and recognition programs, the Government will create a 'sign-post' to existing award programs on the GROW webpage.</p>
<p>c. Buying media space for a broad advertising campaign.</p>	<p>Support in principle.</p> <p>In line with the Committee's report, the Government believes that industry has a lead role to play in industry promotion. The Government will complement industry's efforts by continuing to promote a positive image through industry profiling; communication activities such as presence at farm days and expos; a presence at the Regional Living Expo; and investing in the Hart of the BBQ television series (showcasing local food and regions) during 2012.</p> <p>Through the Growing Food and Fibre initiative, Government is assisting industry to increase productivity and profitability across sectors, positively impacting on the image of the industry and its attractiveness to the wider public.</p> <p>The Government does not support buying broad media space, as this is a role for industry if it feels it is the most effective and relevant way to engage the wider public on the image of agriculture. The industry roundtable will provide a forum for industry-wide discussion of this matter.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: That the state government work with industry to support the development of an information and promotion campaign highlighting opportunities for young people and new farmers in niche agricultural industries. Such a campaign could focus on the relative ease of entry into the industry, its profitability and environmental credentials.</p>	<p>Support in part.</p> <p>The Government supports a partnership approach with industry in profiling realistic career opportunities for new entrants to the industry.</p> <p>The Government acknowledges that niche industries are one pathway of entry to the industry but recognises and supports the need for many different pathways, business models and options to be available to new entrants. There are attractive and successful careers to be had across agricultural fields.</p> <p>Information about careers in the food and fibre industry are profiled on the Government's GROW Your Food and Fibre Career webpage.</p>

	<p>Updates to this information will be considered following the outcomes from the industry roundtable (as outlined in Recommendation 1).</p>
<p>Recommendation 6: That the state government include modern images of agriculture and food and fibre producers in its information and marketing materials, to change the public’s ‘traditional’ view of the agricultural industry including the importance of health and well-being.</p>	<p>Support. The Government supports the use of modern images of agriculture and food and fibre producers in its information and communications material. DPI communication material portrays diversity of sectors, ages, gender, technology and scale. This is evidenced through the Government’s Growing Food and Fibre initiative and the DPI website.</p>
<p>Recommendation 23: As a means of promoting good employment practices in agriculture that the state government sponsor an Employer of Choice in Agriculture Award on an annual basis.</p>	<p>Support in principle. The Government supports reward and recognition of employers demonstrating best practice in human resources policies and practices. Government and industry sponsor agribusinesses and employer of choice award programs operating at a state and national level, such as the NAB Agribusiness Employer of Choice Award and Agribusiness Leader of the Year Award, and WestVic Employer of the Year. To promote best practice of employers in the agriculture industry the Government will create a ‘sign-post’ to award opportunities on the GROW webpage. The Government will facilitate a conversation exploring industry’s desire to sponsor their own Employee of Choice Award at the industry roundtable (as outlined in Recommendation 1).</p>

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