

SUBMISSION 14/10/2019 from Workforce Development Project, NELLEN and NETRACKS LLEN, Victoria

Inquiry into growing Australian agriculture to \$100 billion by 2030

- the opportunities and impediments to the primary production sectors realising their ambition to achieve a combined \$100 billion value of production by 2030.

This submission deals with a significant impediment to achieving the ambition of primary production sectors and offers a solution to one aspect of the impediment, **workforce development**.

Impediment: attracting and retaining young people into the sector

Many reports already identify this difficulty and I don't seek to replicate those; however, the significance of this impediment is compounded by the decline of rural and regional populations in some areas. This is not confined to primary production as we see similar data around attracting expertise in Health and Education, in fact attracting and retaining expertise to rural areas in those 3 sectors is intimately connected and should be the basis for governments at all levels to share models. Primary production workforce development in rural areas is strongly linked to opportunities in Health and Education.

Solution: Australia-wide replication of the WIRL model for workforce development

The Workforce Development Project (WDP) expands on a Year 9 Agriculture/Horticulture pilot program developed and delivered at Mansfield Secondary College. Commencing in 2009 it is now an integrated part of the school's curriculum. The program addresses the need for a sustainable agriculture workforce by recruiting Year 9/10 students into agricultural careers through early contact with employers, i.e. farmers and agribusinesses, then offering an enrolment into relevant Vocational Education and Training (VET) Certificates presented by a local TAFE provider or support to choose requisite VCE subjects.

Funded by Regional Development Victoria (RDV) the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) of NE Victoria are supporting schools to implement this model in Agriculture, Horticulture and health (identified key industries but suitable for any industry), creating sustainable, inexpensive industry partnerships which deliver unpredicted, unprecedented and replicable results.

A full description of the model is in the supporting documents.

Supporting documents:

1. Workforce Development Project Annual Report,
2. WIRL Descriptor
3. WIRL for Principals
4. Video (link will be emailed separately)

Reports and Inquiries by governments, departments and industry bodies have continued, at least since the mid-nineties, to make recommendations e.g. Victorian Parliamentary *Inquiry into the capacity of the farming sector to attract and retain young farmers and respond to an ageing workforce*, Victorian Government Education and Training Committee *Inquiry into Agricultural Education and Training (Recommendation 13 the roll-out of this model)*, Vict'n DEPI, 2013, NSW Gov't *Review into Agricultural Education and Training in New South Wales*, NFF, etc., etc.,

The problem has already been identified. Proposed solutions mainly seek to reproduce models of the 20th Century. This model is different.

We are available to discuss perceived blockers such as teacher training and RTO funding.

Current delivery of Ag/Hort Education in Secondary Schools

Education models in Ag/Hort are our area of expertise and we are pleased to further advise the committee upon request. The notes below will support your understanding of the current delivery of Ag/Hort Education; a varied, sporadic and 'scatter-gun' approach:

1. Some schools deliver successful outcomes via agricultural farms – some other states much better than Victoria. Aspects that make this model inefficient in terms of replication are:
 - a) the struggle in terms of succession – see *Rural Skills Education & Training (DAFF Inquiry 2007)2.13*
 - b) the struggle in terms of on-going costs for schools
 - c) the difficulty to replicate because of the cost of infrastructure and low numbers of trained teachers
2. Some schools offer 'experiential' opportunities that operate as 'tasters' or offer units of work within the curriculum; these do not deliver the sophisticated skill-set required by primary producers nor offer articulation into pathways; a few schools offer VCE/HSC Ag/Hort
3. Centralised, specialist schools deliver sophisticated outcomes at great cost to the public purse and the benefit of a few (e.g. Queensland's Coaldrake Report)
4. RTOs deliver to post-secondary students and some secondary students. Recent data shows declining enrolments in Certificates and appalling levels of completion (see NCVER)
5. Some Universities now scaffold career pathways so that Certificate courses can lead onto Diplomas can lead on to Degree courses if desired e.g. CSU, UNE and Melb Uni – Dookie.
6. Careers teachers can access sophisticated material from a number of sources (PIEFA, CSIRO – STEMX, Teacher FX, ASTA etc.,)