

## **Executive Summary**

The Cattle Council of Australia strongly supports the House of Representatives Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee for its leadership in the progression of this inquiry. In this response CCA has recognized the important roles of various organizations, both public and private, in the delivery of extension and training services to producers and the entire value chain. CCA is concerned that in this period of transition of deliverers, that the beef industry will require ongoing support from both state and federal governments in order to adequately address the requirements of the industry and its stakeholders. CCA has subsequently provided five recommendations, which it is hoped will assist the Committee in its deliberations.

1. CCA recommends the Committee recognize the importance and relevance of State Government extension services to the beef industry. CCA also urges to all State Governments to work collaboratively with the Federal Government and the beef industry, through provision of sufficient funding and resourcing, to ensure that adequate extension and training resources are in place in key food safety and disease areas.
2. CCA suggests the Committee recognize the importance and relevance of MLA activities in research and development, and the facilitation and management of training and extension services. CCA also urges all State and Federal Governments to work collaboratively in developing improved mechanisms for the provision of Farmbis funding in all jurisdictions, to ensure the ongoing availability and success of EDGENetwork courses.
3. CCA suggests the Committee recognize the ongoing value of the Beef CRC and it's associated activities to Australian beef producers, the wider agriculture sector, and the community.
4. CCA recommends that the Committee note the varying nature of training organizations and opportunities for the beef industry. CCA also suggests that improved arrangements for the provision of federal funding (such as the extension of Farmbis) to assist Certificate III training is appropriate to ensure that appropriate and specific skills are adequately provided, and that the Committee recognize the clear justification for those training activities which have a strong public benefit (such as AHA and Chemcert training).
5. CCA would suggest that the Committee note the very high level of commitment that a diverse number of producer groups are demonstrating towards improved training provision, but to recognize that crucial gaps currently exist in the coordination and communication of the varied opportunities which are provided. CCA would also suggest that to further improve this situation that federal funds may be needed to ensure coordination activities undertaken by industry are adequately resourced and thus effective. In addition CCA would suggest the Committee conduct further consultation with training delivery groups (especially state farmer organizations) to specifically determine local gaps or potential improvements to training delivery and funding.

## **Introduction – Cattle Council of Australia.**

The Cattle Council of Australia was established in July 1979, bringing together for the first time in a single organisation all farmer organisations whose members had beef cattle enterprises.

In brief, the objective of CCA is to represent and promote the interests of Australian beef cattle producers. This is achieved through wide and regular consultation with, and policy advice to, key industry organisations, relevant Federal Government Departments and other bodies regarding issues of national and international importance.

CCA members include State Farmer organizations (SFOs), namely Agforce, NSWFA, VFF, SAFF, WAFF, PGA, NTCA and TFGA. CCA also has a considerable set of linkages with research groups such as the Northern and Southern Australian Beef Research Councils, producer groups such as the Beef Improvement Association, and other relevant industry stakeholders such as the Australian Cattle Veterinarians (AACV) and ARCBA (the Australian Registered Cattle Breed Association), all of which are associate members. CCA has also endorsed the work of the Australian Beef Industry Foundation (ABIF), and Rural Industry Training and Extension (RITE).

CCA is a full member of the National Farmers Federation, holding 6 votes on the NFF Policy Council, and defers to NFF on cross-sectoral issues

## **Background – the Australian Beef Industry.**

The Australian beef industry is the single most valuable farm export, and contributes around 15% of total farm exports. This translates as 3.7% of total merchandise exports, or as the 5<sup>th</sup> most valuable merchandise export.

Approximately 60% of all farm establishments in Australia are involved in cattle production, which equates to around 48% of the nation's land mass. The beef industry has a considerable investment in both on-farm capital (\$118 billion) and in human resources and skill development.

Approximately 200,000 people are employed in the red meat industry, at farm, processing and retail levels, of which more than one fifth are farm employees in the beef sector. The predominance of the beef industry as a long/full term employer of staff, more often on a full time or year round basis (rather than seasonal or part time) basis, justifies the ongoing investment in education and training by employers and government.

Producers too form a crucial skills bank, with more than 77,000 properties involved in beef production, of which 20,000 are specialist beef producers. Like most agricultural industries the increasing average age of producers continues to be a source of concern, with only around 10% of owners/managers aged under 35. The average age of producer in the beef industry is greater than that for the dairy, sheep, horticulture and grain industries. These demographic features influences the sustainability of the beef industry and agricultural in general. Young entrants to farming tend to have a higher standard of formalized education (on average) than preceding generations. The increased education young farmers bring to farm businesses are clearly a very important element of many farms. Young people bring new ideas and concepts to agricultural businesses, and young producers tend to be

innovators. Clearly a focus on youth training and career development is appropriate. However the industry is also working to ensure that the producers aged over 35 entering the industry (approximately 65% of entrants) are well equipped with appropriate skills, and able to continue to participate in ongoing training.

CCA suggests that training and further education are widely seen by the beef and pastoral industry as important to improve competitiveness, foster innovation, ensure compliance with regulation, improve production through quality assurance adoption and to retain staff. Cattle producers and those who support them; from advisers/extension officers, researchers, to NRM facilitators or certification trainers, face ongoing challenges and changes to the industry.

The beef industry and those involved in research, training and extension face challenges and cannot focus only on improving performance, but must do so whilst also continually adapting to new issues, in order to meet changing market requirements, legislative frameworks and community expectations.

## **Cattle Council understanding of Rural Skills, Training and Research in the Australian Beef Industry.**

CCA is well aware of the ongoing trends in regards to the provision of extension and training services in the beef industry, and has concerns that without fully adequate resourcing and appropriate management, the industry will face considerable difficulties in the future. CCA has concern with the adequacy of public sector resources devoted to extension and research, particularly at a State Government level. CCA is also concerned that there are issues that are impairing the effectiveness of resources which are put towards rural extension by both public and private sector stakeholders. CCA hopes that this submission may highlight the ongoing importance of research, training and extension in this crucial rural industry.

CCA applauds the House of Representatives Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Committee for it's initiatives in progressing this inquiry, and hopes that this submission may assist the Committee in its deliberations.

The entire agricultural sector continues to face challenges in ensuring that adequate extension and advisory services are available and uptaken by producers. The beef industry faces these challenges but also other industry specific issues. The Australian Government has many very important and worthwhile roles in support the beef industry and addressing these issues for all producers.

### **Role of State Government Extension**

State Departments of Agriculture or Primary Industries have been in the past the dominant provider of extension services to the beef industry, and have played a considerable and vital role in the uptake by producers of new technologies and processes, even where such innovations are researched by non-government organizations. However in all states and territories there has, over time, been considerable reductions in the resourcing of these departments. Subsequent reductions in the provision extension services have being compounded by a departure from the traditional functions and role of government extension providers. The focus has predominately shifted from 'production' focussed extension work to

environmental or regulation enforcement, with delivery of production innovations often stymied when a commercial entity has not filled the extension gap.

This 'double withdrawal' has, in terms of the perceptions of beef cattle producers, exacerbated concerns that state governments are not providing a sufficient level of commitment to the future of the beef industry. Many beef producers believe that this neglect of extension and training will not be adequately filled by replacement industry programs or the private sector trainers. This leaves an ongoing void that ultimately may cost the entire community, and certainly may impact negatively on those producers who continue to expect state resources to be provided without charge.

A principle concern of CCA is the number of staff in state government who actually conduct extension and training work. Universally this number has fallen, a case in point being the NSW Department of Agriculture, which has been forced (as a result of government budget cuts and departmental mergers) to significantly reduce its livestock industry's extension work. As an example the NSW-DPI employs significantly less staff for these purposes than previously, and CCA understands that this number will fall further in the next year. NSW-DPI was unwilling to provide CCA with specific staff numbers.

CCA and a number of industry bodies share a great frustration about the lack of transparency by state authorities and governments in detailing exactly what resources are being allocated to training and extension work. While in some cases staffing rates may not have dropped significantly, the industry is concerned that the effective work of such staff may be impaired by the lack of other resources provided to them. This 'paralysis' of staff may in some instances be preventing them from adequately servicing their region. This fact, combined with the predicament that industry training providers and organizations are not privy to an acceptable detail of operational funding by some state governments, means that the capacity for a response by industry is limited. Industry cannot fill shortfalls where it is not advised that such shortfalls exist, or where agencies or authorities do not acknowledge that shortfalls are occurring. Clearly a greater transparency by all levels of government as to the staffing and operational roles of their extension and training providers will enable appropriate responses from industry providers, and must occur if some of these scarcities are to be addressed.

Despite these detrimental trends, the role of State Governments is extremely important in ensuring that key activities and programs are properly delivered. For instance in some jurisdictions the staffing resources put towards the implementation of the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) has been commendable. The Victorian DPI is currently providing funding for 7.5 full time equivalents staff for extension and operations of the NLIS helpline, with the potential for up to 9.5 staff in the future.

The VDPI's training of members of the entire value chain, from producers through to agents, processors and transporters has been a primary factor in the success of the implementation of this crucial industry and government system. This contribution is of course expected from producers, given that NLIS is made mandatory by state regulations, and significant and ongoing state resources must be provided to ensure that equitable cost sharing occurs. NLIS extension assistance is just one example where producers have rightly demanded that significant government contributions to extension are made, and where the performance of such staff and resources has been well justified in terms of whole-community benefit outcomes.

Unfortunately not all such government and industry programs have enjoyed similar support. The Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) system is a food safety and production program which has been in place for scarcely 12 months, but which has the involvement of nearly 150,000 red meat producing properties, and over 30,000 fully accredited properties. LPA has a very clear benefit to the wider community and consumers through its enhancement of human health and food safety aspects of the production of red meat.

Unfortunately state government contributions to implementation, promotion and service provision (often of traditional roles government roles such as on-farm persistent chemical advice) associated with LPA has been minimal, or non-existent. The beef industry has even been approached by many state DPIs with requests for additional funding for these roles. The provision of these services by government is simply a minimum expectation of producers. CCA insists that where public benefit is so clear, and where significant industry (both individual and sectoral) contributions to cost are already occurring, that the respective state governments need to make contributions to ensure that adequate resources are available.

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## **Role of MLA**

The extension and training role of Meat and Livestock is complex. MLA provides a mass of extremely worthwhile resources to Australian beef producers, much of which is provided at minimal or no cost to registered producer members of MLA.

Although MLA retains it's strong research and development focus, it has been recognized that some ongoing contribution to on-farm adoption of such technologies and practices is critical, if industry benefits are to be realized. Again the changing role of state agencies has obliged this increasing focus on direct extension, although MLA generally has a secondary function in the delivery or certification of training.

MLA also manages the red meat industry's EDGEnetwork. EDGEnetwork is a suite of 50 practical workshops, delivered through a national network of licensees and trained deliverers, to help producers gain knowledge and develop skills to improve their livestock enterprises. Its workshops, which are typically 1-3 days in duration, cover the broad areas of finance, business development, marketing, livestock, pastures, people and natural resource management.

EDGEnetwork was initiated in 1998 and launched in 2001 as a joint initiative of MLA and the Victorian Department of Primary Industries. Since then it has attracted over 9,000 participants across Australia.

Apart from the significant costs involved in the development, piloting, production and competency mapping of course content, EDGEnetwork costs MLA in excess of \$1 mill per year to operate. This covers licensee fees, coordinator expenses, workshop notes development and printing, marketing costs, train-the-trainer costs, meetings etc Licensees pay MLA a royalty based on number of participants per year, and workshop notes are provided by MLA on a cost-recovery basis.

MLA does not set the price to producers for participating in EDGENetwork workshops. This is the responsibility of the licensees, and varies by state according to market rates for other training programs, access to Farmbis and/or education funding. This lack of nationally standardized arrangements does present some difficulties in promotion and awareness work.

Farmbis funding of EDGENetwork workshops has been a key factor in reducing the cost to participating producers. This has been particularly evident during 2004-2005 when there has been a significant decline in producer participation in EDGENetwork directly due to lack of available Farmbis funding. There are two major issues with the current arrangements for Farmbis. Firstly that uncertainty for producers and EDGENetwork trainers means that the scheduling of courses may be delayed until state specific funding arrangements are finalized. Secondly that the varying (generally increasing) costs as a result of changed arrangements makes producers less enthusiastic about courses. There is a strong correlation between the level of support for such courses and the number of producers attending, as would be expected in a situation where smaller and less financially secure producers who cannot absorb significant increases in their limited training budgets. Clearly such producers are most at risk of not being able to adequately adopt improved production technologies, especially in times of financial hardship such as drought, despite being the group that most requires this improved productivity. It is therefore most distressing for CCA to note the apparent withdrawal from Farmbis by the NSW government, and would caution that this decision will have adverse impacts on the NSW economy. The timing of such a decision is also deleterious, given at a time when producers are struggling with drought management, and without strong incentives may lack the resources to participate in training.

MLA also has a significant role in creating awareness of pivotal producer issues and paths to improve practices, throughout the red meat value chain. MLA's More Beef From Pastures, Grain & Graze, and provision of "Tips&Tools" are example of the considerable resource which industry is committing to improvement. The More Beef From Pastures is a program which is designed to allow southern beef producers identify and implement on-farm management practices to maximise the profitability and sustainability of their business. CCA regards such initiatives as an extremely positive way in which to improve uptake of research and development by producers.

In terms of the content of such industry provided resources, MLA's focus on improved resource use in the context of long term sustainability clearly demonstrates that there is a strong community benefit to all such activities. MLA will also be increasing it's provision of such resources with the development of an redmeat/pastoral industry EMS (environmental management system) program. Linked to second tier LPA programs, this new option for producers significantly improve their access to information required to facilitate improved environmental outcomes. Again whole community benefits will arise from the uptake of LPA in terms of improved awareness to critical production practices that relate to food safety.

Clearly MLA is making effective use of the \$25million in public funding which co contributes with industry to fund Research and Development activities. The ongoing provision of this very necessary funding is crucial.

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*Farmbis funding in all jurisdictions, to ensure the ongoing availability and success of EDGENetwork courses.*

## **Beef CRC**

The CRC for Cattle and Beef Quality is currently funded by the Commonwealth's "Cooperative Research Centres Program", launched in 1990. The Program has been one of Australia's most innovative research initiatives designed to promote cooperation between research institutions and investment by industry in the R&D process.

The Beef CRC was established in 1993 to undertake large scale investigations to identify the major genetic and non-genetic factors influencing beef quality. This research underpins Australia's position of World's No. 1 Beef trader and has helped expand the beef sectors' annual value to more than \$9 billion. The CRC was refunded for a second 7 year term in 1999 and was successful in it's application for a third term of 7 years to commence in July 2005.

The Beef CRC has continued to provide industry with research outcomes that have been of significant value to the cattle industry. These include programs which have raised the awareness of heritable traits which can influence beef quality, use of progeny testing of those attributes and made improved selection tools available for producers; especially in the characteristics of eating qualities such as marbling, tenderness and retail beef yield, and intake requirements such as net feed intake tests. The CRC has also developed vaccines against Pestivirus and Bovine Respiratory Disease. Combined with developments such as Breedplan and Genestar, Australia producers now have the most advanced breeding selection tools available worldwide.

The CRC has provided excellent value for money to government. For an investment of \$37M over 13 years the Commonwealth has achieved an integrated Beef Research program, of the highest merit, worth \$146 Million. The balance of funding has come from MRC, MLA, ALFA and others in the private sector together with generous inputs from the scientific institutions, especially CSIRO, QDPI, NSW agriculture and UNE. Estimated economic returns value on outputs from the CRC will be in excess of \$1.78billion dollars in today's money.

It's 1st and 2nd iterations have demonstrated the Beef CRC's key strengths; an outstanding track record shown by high quality of science, leadership through commercialization, building experience and importantly the ability to achieve genuine results. As a result industry is very pleased to continue it's provision of support and resources to the CRC

The four key program areas of the 3rd Beef CRC will allow Australian producers to take advantage of the tremendous advancements occurring as a result of the expansion in Genomics knowledge, combined with the potential to develop animal selection that increase the international competitiveness of our industry through more efficient production of beef of exacting quality. Research and development which enhances Australian beef producer's ability to increase compliance with market requirements is critical in our high value export markets, whilst improved reproductive performance will increase efficiencies for breeders. Of increasing importance in the future is the research which will allow producers to increase feed capture rates, reduce methane emissions and improve the animal welfare by raising stock with lower stress levels.

Cattle Council reiterates it's ongoing support of the Beef CRC. The value of the CRC's research to the beef industry is undeniable and it's continuation essential for the ongoing competitiveness of our nations biggest agricultural export.

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### **Role of Training Provides**

There are a number of training providers which have developed some extremely worthwhile programs for the beef industry. RITE, ChemCert, AHA and RTCA are examples which despite having different roles, target participants and geographical span, still work towards the common goal of improvements in the productivity and safety of the industry. RITE, ChemCert, and AHA are therefore valuable examples of the diversity of training providers for the beef industry, with RTCA providing an overarching planning and design of learning processes fro agricultural industry.

RITE is a not for profit organisation promoting innovative training and employment solutions for rural communities, business and industry. RITE ( in it's current form) has been active since 1987. RITE is a well-respected provider of training and employment opportunities relevant to and delivered in rural communities, with a particular emphasis on the cattle industry. RITE is a Group Training Company and Registered Training Organisation (RTO), is able to offer employment and nationally recognised vocational training qualifications. CCA has endorsed RITE and it's ongoing activities

RITE's two main activities are full time and school based traineeships. The full time traineeship is conducted over 1-3 years, depending on the entry level of the trainee. During this time, trainees complete the Certificate II and III in Agriculture (Beef Cattle Production). Trainees live and work full time on the cattle property. The school based traineeship is generally conducted during Years 10 - 12, where students are required to complete one week of formal training per school term and 10 weeks of on-the-job training per year. During this time, trainees will complete the Certificate II in Agriculture (Beef Cattle Production). Opportunities are available for school based trainees to continue on as full time trainees on completion of their studies.

CCA believes that RITE provides an example of how a relatively localised group can provide an effective base for the provision of training and facilitation of career progression, on a localized basis. CCA would note that RITE, like other trainers providing Certificate III level training, is limited by the lack of Farmbis funding to support such activities.

ChemCert Australia is a national, non-profit organization established by the National Farmers' Federation over a decade ago, to develop the resources and standards for training farmers and related workers in the safe use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals. ChemCert's establishment was a response to the need for industry leadership in the area of training in the use of farm chemicals and it is the only national program for chemical use training.

ChemCert has issued over 200,000 accreditations and currently issues around 20,000 accreditations annually. ChemCert Accreditation is valid for 5 years, after which participants undergo further training and assessment before being accredited



for a further period. ChemCert training is incorporated in a number of major Quality Assurance programs (for instance the Woolworths Quality Management System) for fresh produce. ChemCert has a network of over 200 trainers. Again the level of training creates issues for participants who do not receive government support for training in this specific area whilst at a Certificate III level.

CCA believes that pending the adoption of better coordination and co recognition of ChemCert courses in Australia (specifically between state jurisdictions and for multiple industries) that a greatly increased adoption of ChemCert will have considerable community benefits through improved environmental, OH&S and food safety outcomes.

One of the industry's most valuable training providers is Animal Health Australia (AHA). AHA is a jointly operated, non-profit public Company established by governments and livestock industries, whose role in the national animal health system is to identify national priorities, engage animal health system stakeholders in pursuing agreed priorities, integrate activities of service participants, facilitate manage and evaluate national programs and communicate national animal health performance.

AHA has a range of continuing training programs, namely the Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) Core training Activities and the Rapid Response Team training. AHA has recently developed a national training strategy to ensure that Australia has the capability to address priority Animal Health issues, by ensuring there are sufficient adequately trained personnel to respond to a potential incident (in all sectors) with consistency. Subsequently AHA has introduced a range of new training programs, namely EAD training management, APAV training (for private sector veterinarians), AAEVET (for AQIS accredited export veterinarians), ILO training, AVR training (Australian veterinarian reserve training) and JDMAP training (for John's Disease Market Assurance Program practitioners), and the Biosecurity Workshop for Producers.

CCA regards all of these training initiatives as positive, and given the paramount importance of the beef cattle industry's disease status on community food safety and international market access, of critical importance. CCA would highlight the importance of the ILO (Industry Liaison Officer) training program, which will allow 1000 ILO's to be trained by June 2007. This activity has been well supported by government who have provided matching funding to the industry commitment. Financial assistance to participating producers, as well as to group coordinators, provides the necessary incentive for these leading producers who would play such a critical role in the advent of a disease incident. AHA has also taken a positive step in ensuring all training programs are now NATA accredited, adding a further personal achievement for successful participants, and a further incentive for individuals to participate. Clearly the continuation of this commitment from government to the nation's response capacity is justified, and CCA looks forward to ongoing support for AHA's training activities.

The critical issue of training management is a function of the (old) RTCA. RTCA is a national body established by agricultural industries to act on their behalf in all matters pertaining to the education and training needs of regional, rural and related industries, including horticulture and conservation and land management.

RTCA plan and design learning processes to meet industry needs and provides strategic advice on vocational education and training needs for the regional, rural and related industries.

While RTCA has been nominally effective in many of its functions the beef industry does believe that there is are some ongoing operational issues for the organization in its new form. Following the Review of National Industry Advisory Arrangements, initiated by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), the merger of advisory bodies has begun. RTCA has been a key participant in the development of a new National Industry Skills Council with the ITABs and Recognized bodies, namely those covering the Seafood, Food Industry, Meat Industry and Racing. This new body, the Agri-food Industry Skills Council has been operational since May.

CCA does hold concerns regarding the difficulties the Agri-food Council organization may have in effectively meeting the needs such a diverse group of industries, without a significant level of funding to adequately liase together to work through issues. Coordination of training activities and improved synergies is must be highly effective if rural industries are to take advantage of the potential economies of scale which are presented to national industries.

CCA would reiterate it's ongoing support for the new single body, but would caution that for this organization to be fully effective in its management, development and design functions that considerable resources will be required.

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### **Role of Beef Producer Groups**

There are a number of active beef producer groups in the industry, most of which provide excellent services to their members in regard to technical training, education and the provision of general industry information. In many instances these producer groups are not the actual deliverers or trainers. Instead they facilitate the concentration of sufficient numbers of producers to ensure that extension and training work is commercial for trainers.

These groups also provide a service in terms of experience sharing, communication, awareness of regulations and even social or community linkages, which might be otherwise absent in sparsely populated remote regions.

One unfortunate aspect of these producer groups is that they are sometime disparate in terms of organizational structure, affiliation, goals and inter-organizational co-operation. There is also a certain problem in that some youth/young producer industry groups wax and wain as key active members move out of organizations. This does create problems for deliver bodies in maintaining contact and engagement with such groups. In many instances co-operation and information sharing between groups is via semi-formalized or personal contact, and is not always effectively coordinated. Increasing use of EDGENetwork and MLA resources is improving this

situation, but further centralization (at least of communication) may be one appropriate way to improve uptake and participation in such groups.

The Australian Beef Industry Foundation (ABIF) has been established as a charity to specifically inspire careers in the Australian beef industry. It is currently an amelioration of some of the major beef societies, major employees and other interest parties who are actively coordinating their youth activities. ABIF is making an attempt to build the steps necessary to attract young people into the beef industry and lead participants up those steps, in order to launch them into a lifelong career in the industry. ABIF uses young industry champions to highlight the many varied and worthwhile careers in the industry; whether it be in seedstock, commercial, feedlot, processing or marketing sub-sectors.

ABIF is proposing to establish a web-based beef industry careers database providing access to the range of careers throughout the entire supply chain, training and education available and the financial and work experience assistance available. This is currently not available, and may be blocking potential entrants. Therefore people considering a career in the beef industry may have little information and often do not know "how to get in".

Of equal or greater importance is the lack of people (particularly young people) actually entering the beef industry, providing a significant shortage of human resource for the industry and its future. ABIF will be actively seeking to promote the careers website database to encourage entry of young people into the industry.

The ABIF proposal to develop a centralized careers website will be a pivotal tool in improving this situation. This website will attempt to include any and all training organizations and activities, from a Certificate I level to a post-graduate doctorate level, which relate to a career in the beef industry. The website will use such a database to provide easy links for those people involved (or considering) a career in the industry. By mapping common career progressions, giving indicative training requirements and pay-rates for common positions and creating links to trainers and employer groups, the ABIF website will become a 'one-stop-shop' for beef industry career development. Such a website will be an important element in the further promotion and encouragement of industry participants. In addition it will help realise the synergies which potentially exist in the industry. There should be considerable efficiency improvements in training and extension work for this wide spread industry if the ABIF plan is successful.

Such producer groups need greater resources in order to effectively coordinate, publicize and create enthusiasm about the activities and services which they provide. Initiatives being developed for the synchronization of different breed society youth groups may be applicable to the livestock producing community. These ideas include web based regional, activity and time searches to allow producers to effectively and easily find relevant activities, regardless of whether they are members. The provision of such a resource at a federal level would be a cost effective way for government to make a further contribution to livestock producers.

As groups such as the Beef Improvement Association have demonstrated, producer groups can be very effective in delivery of extension and training to innovative and 'leading' producers. The BIA is a group of like-minded beef producers with over 1,000 members in 30 branches across Australia. Members are involved with a wide range of breeds and production environments throughout Australia. BIA has been a critical driver of the uptake of innovation, and by bringing leading innovators together to share ideas, contributes greatly to the setting of new trends in production.

### Other Groups

There are a number of other equally relevant and worthwhile producer groups but has included the above as illustrations of leading groups and strategies. State Farmer Organizations list highest in this group, with many organizations provide significant assistance to producers (from branch to state levels) in the coordination and organization of a number of important awareness and training initiatives.

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### **Conclusions**

The Australian beef industry has recognized the transition of extension and training roles in all beef producing areas, and has to it's best ability, responded through private sector initiatives which have enjoyed a much needed level of assistance from the Federal Government through a number of programs. The industry has made a solid contribution to research and development through MLA and the beef CRC and continues to applaud the federal governments contribution to these bodies. The beef cattle industry will continue to focus the need to drive innovation through increased uptake.

However the beef industry will continue to require ongoing support from both state and federal governments to adequately address these requirements, and with this in mind CCA reiterates the following recommendations to the Committee.

1. CCA recommends the Committee recognize the importance and relevance of State Government extension services to the beef industry. CCA also urges to all State Governments to work collaboratively with the Federal Government and the beef industry, through provision of sufficient funding and resourcing, to ensure that adequate extension and training resources are in place in key food safety and disease areas.
2. CCA suggests the Committee recognize the importance and relevance of MLA activities in research and development, and the facilitation and management of training and extension services. CCA also urges all State and Federal Governments to work collaboratively in developing improved mechanisms for the provision of Farmbis funding in all jurisdictions, to ensure the ongoing availability and success of EDGenetwork courses.
3. CCA suggests the Committee recognize the ongoing value of the Beef CRC and it's associated activities to Australian beef producers, the wider agriculture sector, and the community.

4. CCA recommends that the Committee note the varying nature of training organizations and opportunities for the beef industry. CCA also suggests that improved arrangements for the provision of federal funding (such as the extension of Farmbis) to assist Certificate III training is appropriate to ensure that appropriate and specific skills are adequately provided, and that the Committee recognize the clear justification for those training activities which have a strong public benefit (such as AHA and Chemcert training).
5. CCA would suggest that the Committee note the very high level of commitment that a diverse number of producer groups are demonstrating towards improved training provision, but to recognize that crucial gaps currently exist in the coordination and communication of the varied opportunities which are provided. CCA would also suggest that to further improve this situation that federal funds may be needed to ensure coordination activities undertaken by industry are adequately resourced and thus effective. In addition CCA would suggest the Committee conduct further consultation with training delivery groups (especially state farmer organizations) to specifically determine local gaps or potential improvements to training delivery and funding.

CCA looks forward to providing further information to the Committee at it's convenience.



***This submission has been prepared by the Cattle Council of Australia Inc.***

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