



Tasmania

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES  
AND FORESTRY

Mr Alby Schultz MP  
Chairperson  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry  
Parliament House  
Canberra  
ACT 2600

Dear Mr Schultz,

I refer to your letter of 6 April 2005 inviting a Tasmanian Government submission into the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry's inquiry into rural skills training and research.

Skills shortages are rapidly becoming an issue of not only national, but also international concern. Tasmania's changing demographic profile and ageing population, coupled with identified skill shortages in a number of areas, are stimulating a range of government activity at all levels.

Traditionally, management of rural enterprises has been passed down from one generation to the next over a number of years. This has enabled the transfer of years of skills and experience to the younger generation, which is then blended with fresh ideas and the ability to adopt new technology. However, evidence indicates that young people are becoming less interested in being involved in these rural enterprises, being instead lured away to careers with potentially greater financial rewards. This trend has significant repercussions for the future of agriculture and, in turn, the economy.

The Tasmanian Government, through TAFE Tasmania, offers a range of nationally recognised courses aimed at attracting people into careers in agriculture and developing the skills necessary for the future of this sector. Courses offered range from a Certificate I in Rural Production, (necessary to operate at entry level activities in farming, with the possibility of obtaining a rural traineeship) to an Advanced Diploma in Agriculture, which is aimed at those people who are farm owners, company farm managers, supervising technical officers or large share farmers, who have responsibility for running the operation on a day-to-day basis, but also the responsibility of planning both short and long term activities including budget control. TAFE Tasmania also maintains a rural training facility, Freer Farm, which is a 500-acre, fully operational farm attached to the TAFE Burnie campus.

The Tasmanian Agricultural Industry Training Demand Profile (TAITDP) identifies a range of areas of industry demand for training from the public training system. These include, Occupational Health and Safety skills, an understanding of Quality Assurance and additional assistance for those with language, literacy and numeracy problems. It is identified as equally important to continue the current qualifications delivered by the public training system, such as:

- Certificate I in Rural Production (entry level people using Freer Farm as property) and
- Certificate II, III, IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Agriculture

The TAITDP notes that it is also important that there continues to be the ability to deliver these courses in either full time or part time mode to suit those already in the workforce. Similarly, Certificate I II and III courses need to meet the needs of VET in Schools and the seasonal workforce so that they can acquire industry based relevant training. A copy of the Tasmanian Agricultural Industry Training Demand Profile is attached for further information.

Finally, the Tasmanian State Training Authority (TASTA) (now the Tasmania Industry Advisory Group (TIAG) convened an industry forum on skills, education and training for agriculture in June 2004. A copy of the report from that forum is also attached for your information. The TIAG forum noted that there was a desire for more people to be trained in specific areas such as management and agricultural business as well as a need for access to higher-level skills, through courses offered by TAFE Tasmania and work with the University of Tasmania. To this end, there needs to be a greater flexibility within Universities towards the recognition of VET qualifications and other relevant experience. Similarly, training packages should have the flexibility to allow greater use of on-farm training and provide industry with a greater incentive to develop skills.

As noted in the attached report, TIAG forum participants consider the role of government to be one of facilitating industry input, through avenues such as the TIAG forum, into the government provision of training and education for agriculture. The forum report notes that, while there is government assistance for training available to agricultural businesses, industry leadership is fundamental to addressing skill related issues. This leadership, combined with inter and intra-government approaches to identified industry issues, has the capacity to inform cooperative solutions.

I hope that the material provided is beneficial to your Committee's Inquiry. The contact officer for this Inquiry is Mr Peter Bennett, Department of Premier and Cabinet. Should you have any queries in relation to this submission, Mr Bennett can be contacted on (03) 6233 6343, or by e-mail on [Peter.Bennett@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:Peter.Bennett@dpac.tas.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



Paul Lennon  
Premier