



MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY;
THE MIDWEST AND WHEATBELT
LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL



Ref: 8-01405

SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION NO. 97

Mr A Schultz
Committee Chair
House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Schultz

Attached is a report prepared, with input from industry stakeholders, as a submission to the Inquiry into Rural Skills, Education, Training and Research.

The creation of more cross-collaborative and long-term initiatives between Governments, research and education institutions would significantly strengthen and benefit rural education, training and research in Western Australia. Western Australia currently has some very good working examples that contribute important and essential services to rural education and research, such as the Western Australian College of Agriculture and Agricultural Research Western Australia. The provision of long-term funding, planning and a more collaborative approach to information and services would better enable strategic delivery of such education and research to Western Australian agricultural industries.

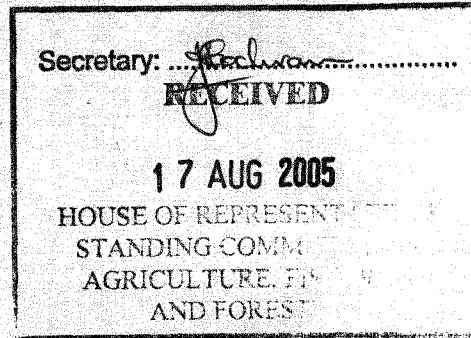
I understand that the State representatives have already outlined some of the key issues during the public hearing held by your Committee in Perth on 20 July 2005. I look forward to a positive outcome from this important initiative.

Yours sincerely

Kim Chance MLC
MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

Attachment: Report

10 AUG 2005



**THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE WESTERN AUSTRALIA
IN CONJUNCTION WITH
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**RESPONSE TO THE
STANDING COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND
FORESTRY (SCAFF) INQUIRY INTO
RURAL SKILLS, EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RESEARCH
COLLABORATIVE ANALYSIS OF
RURAL SKILLS, EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN
WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

JULY 25 2005

TERMS OF REFERENCE

STANDING COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY (SCAFF) INQUIRY INTO RURAL SKILLS, EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RESEARCH

The Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, the Hon Warren Truss, has asked the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (SCAFF) to inquire into Rural Skills Training and Research.

The Committee has invited interested persons and organisations to make submissions addressing the inquiry's Terms of Reference, being to inquire into and report on:

1. The availability and adequacy of education and research services in the agriculture sector, including access to vocational training and pathways from vocational education and training to tertiary education and work.
2. The skill needs of agricultural industries in Australia, including the expertise and capacity of industries to specify the skills-sets required for training, and the extent to which vocational training meets the needs of rural industries.
3. The provision of extension and advisory services to agricultural industries, including links and coordination between education, research and extension.
4. The role of the Australian Government in supporting education, research and advisory programs to support the viability and sustainability of Australian agriculture. The following report is submitted by the Government of Western Australia on behalf of a selection of Western Australian industry, research, training and education organisations involved in the State's broader agricultural sector (the Sector).

The report's findings were developed by way of two workshops, one focusing on skills issues and the other on research, and both involving participants from across the spectra of relevant industry and Government stakeholders.

The report outlines the pros and cons of current arrangements - and the key mid-term risks and opportunities - in regard to each of the inquiry's Terms of Reference. The report also proposes a range of specific actions that the Commonwealth Government might consider in its efforts to maximise Australia's benefit from our agricultural, fisheries and forestry industries.

The Government of Western Australia representatives welcomed the opportunity to discuss some elements of the report and its findings with the Standing Committee at the public hearings in Perth on 20th July 2005.

Skills, Education and Training Workshop Participants

Ms	Kareena	May	Kondinin Group
Mr	Fred	Chambers	Rural Skills Australia
Mr	Ross	Mannion	Department of Local Government and Regional Development
Ms	Wendy	Newman	Western Australia Technology & Industry Advisory Council
Mr	Garry	Fischer	Department of Education and Training
Mr	John	Willox	Department of Education and Training
Mr	Ken	Wallace	Department of Conservation and Land Management
Mr	John	Noonan	Department of Agriculture Western Australia
Mr	Dennis	O'Reilly	Department for Planning and Infrastructure
Ms	Sandra	Van Vreeswyk	Department for Planning and Infrastructure
Mr	Trevor	De Landgraft	Western Australian Farmers Federation
Mr	Julian	Breheny	Western Australian Farmers Federation
Mr	Bill	Towie	Forest Products Commission
Mr	Chris	Oliver	Western Australian Primary Industries Training Council
Mr	Bruce	Edwards	Department Of Consumer and Employment Protection (Labour Relations)
Mr	Bruce	Thorpe	Department of Agriculture Western Australia

Research Workshop Participants

Dr	John	Dodd	Department of Agriculture Western Australia
Dr	Miles	Dracup	Department of Agriculture Western Australia
Ms	Wendy	Newman	Western Australian Technology & Industry Advisory Council
Dr	Rob	Kelly	CSIRO
Dr	Wally	Cox	Agricultural Research Western Australia
Mr	Ken	Wallace	Department of Conservation and Land Management
Dr	Nick	Caputi	Department of Fisheries Western Australia
A/Prof	Nick	Costa	Murdoch University

Terms of Reference

1. ***The availability and adequacy of education and research services in the agriculture sector, including access to vocational training and pathways from vocational education and training to tertiary education and work.***

Positive aspects for Western Australia include: the cross-collaboration in education, training and research institutions and services; well-developed working models such as the Western Australian College of Agriculture (WACOA) (*Appendix 1*); Rural Skills Australia (RSA) (*Appendix 2*); and joint partnerships between industry and research and development organisations across the board.

Negative aspects for Western Australia include: the inadequate and discontinuous funding (long-term) and planning (which is having a negative impact on the image of agriculture); the poor image that agricultural courses have compared to more 'glamorous' courses; and the inability to source sufficient, high quality researchers.

SCAFF could assist with: the establishment and implementation of a 10-20 year funding and planning educational model; the amendment of the course funding process to give greater incentives for agriculturally orientated courses; and the promotion of agriculture as an important and valued career.

2. ***The skills needs of agricultural industries in Australia, including the expertise and capacity of industries to specify the skills-sets required for training, and the extent to which vocational training meets the needs of rural industries.***

Positive aspects for Western Australia include: the strong passion and dedication of people in the training, production and research components of the industry; and the involvement of private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) has increased the flexibility and effectiveness of vocational training.

Negative aspects for Western Australia include: the lack of accurate vacancy statistics due to the use of formal employment agencies as the source of statistics which excludes informal data collection methods such as newspaper advertisements and the lack of a long-term 'training needs analysis' such as the Commonwealth/State 'FarmBis' (*Appendix 3*) initiative.

SCAFF can instigate the establishment of a broader-based vacancy statistics process that more accurately reflects employment opportunities across the sector and ensure that a permanent 'training needs analysis' system is implemented as the basis for establishing a realistic and long-term skills needs requirement of the agricultural industries.

3. ***The provision of extension and advisory services to agricultural industries, including links and coordination between education, research and extension.***

Positive aspects for Western Australia include: the existing linkages between advisory councils and agricultural committees such as those that exist between the Western Australian College of Agriculture and the Department of Education and Training; Rural Skills Australia's provision of linkages and coordination that support school to industry transition for young people; the strong industry involvement in major research events and Agricultural Research Western Australia's strong emphasis on outcome delivery.

Negative aspects for Western Australia include: the silo mentality associated between levels of Government, industry and farmers and within Government agencies detracts from what could be achieved; the lack of formalised arrangements between educational

institutions and the agricultural departments for skills expertise; the uncertainty of temporal funding that causes a great turnover of researchers, scientists and trainers; and the inadequate serious incorporation of farmers into the research process.

SCAFF can instigate: the collaboration between and within Government agencies and departments; cross-collaborative initiatives between agricultural departments and education institutions; the establishment of long-term funding plans; and showcase of best practice collaborative research and extension processes that demonstrate the benefits of strong extension planning and meaningful industry involvement.

4. *The role of the Australian government in supporting education, research and advisory programs to support the viability and sustainability of Australian agriculture.*

Positive aspects for Western Australia include: the self-sustainability of agricultural industries; the important economic contribution both domestically and internationally; the growth and expansion of agricultural industries; Commonwealth initiatives such as the Cooperative Research Centre program and CSIRO's Flagship Project program; and the Department of Education, Science and Training's policy settings such as the National Research Priorities and forthcoming Research Quality Framework, are significantly increasing Australia's return on investment in agricultural education and research.

Negative aspects for Western Australia include: the over use of systematic processes which inhibit the role of services to support the viability, sustainability and expansion of Australian agricultural industries; the frequent changes to administrative and policy processes that work against long-term research and development; the over-emphasis on production research prevents agricultural industries from operating in a truly sustainable manner; and the lack of understanding at a community and political level of the contribution that the agricultural industries contribute towards the well being of the nation.

SCAFF can assist with: the establishment of appropriate funding that is sufficient to support these programs; the recognition that most debates are focussed on an economic assessment rather than all facets of community good that the Australian agricultural sector contribute; an increase of interest at a school level; an increase of research focus on sustainability over production; and the establishment of a 'new agriculture' based on advances in agricultural products and production technologies with a central focus of true sustainability.

Appendix 1. Western Australian College of Agriculture
(www.eddept.wa.edu.au/wacoa)

The Western Australian College of Agriculture provides excellent educational opportunities at six residential campuses in Cunderdin, Denmark, Esperance, Harvey, Morawa and Narrogin.

Each Campus has modern facilities located on farms and offer Year 11 and 12 programs for male and female students. The students study a range of Curriculum Council subjects leading to Secondary Graduation and Units of Competence from Industry Training Packages.

The College delivers vocational qualifications that focus on agriculture but include horticulture, viticulture, equine, aquaculture, forestry, building construction, metals and engineering and automotive. Each campus offers some specialist programs that can lead to apprenticeships and careers in a range of agriculture related vocations.

The WA College of Agriculture is unique in providing a blend of secondary education and vocational training. All graduates directly enter employment, courses of study at TAFE or University. The success rate of students is outstanding with nearly all students gaining employment or entry to further courses of study on graduation from the College.



Appendix 2: Rural Skills Australia (www.ruralskills.com.au)

The WA Rural Careers Project has successfully been operating in WA since April 2002, with funding allocated from the Department of Education Science and Training until October 2005. Over this period of time the project has aimed to increase the number of young people entering into careers and/or training in WA Agricultural Industries, by directly targeting schools. As a result of the work that has been undertaken there has been an overall increase in the number of students entering into agricultural industries school based traineeships and structured work experience programs.

There has also been an increase in the number of schools choosing agricultural industries as a VET in Schools option. A large number of schools across the State have been exposed to career opportunities in the industry by the delivery of school career talks from Kununurra in the north to Esperance in the south, as well as the participation at a large number of school career expos. The project has also developed a number of career resources aimed at providing school career advisors, students and parents with up to date and accurate rural career advice.

Appendix 3: Farm Business Development (FarmBis) (www.farmbis.wa.gov.au)

FarmBis is a partnership between the Western Australian and Australian Governments provided through the Department of Agriculture Western Australia (DAWA), supporting eligible participants to participate in learning activities focussed on improving business management skills. FarmBis can provide grants to individuals and farmer groups to subsidise the course cost of approved training that is intended to improve their technical and business management skills and knowledge.

FarmBis aims at:

- lifting the business management skills of primary producers and rural land managers;
- continuous learning culture, innovation and improved business management skills; and
- building the self-reliance, competitiveness and capacity of primary producers to meet the challenge of global change.

FarmBis provides grants to courses in the fields of:

- People Management;
- Financial Management;
- General Business Management ;
- Marketing;
- Production Management; and
- Natural Resource Management/Biodiversity.