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**HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND  
FORESTRY

**Reference: Rural skills training and research**

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**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FORESTRY**

**Wednesday, 9 November 2005**

**Members:** Mr Schultz (*Chair*), Mr Adams (*Deputy Chair*), Mr Martin Ferguson, Mr Michael Ferguson, Mr Forrest, Mr Lindsay, Mr Gavan O'Connor, Mr Secker, Mr Tuckey and Mr Windsor

**Members in attendance:** Mr Adams, Mr Martin Ferguson, Mr Forrest, Mr Schultz, Mr Tuckey and Mr Windsor

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

- 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.
- 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.
- The provision of extension and advisory services to agricultural industries, including links and coordination between education, research and extension.
- The role of the Australian government in supporting education, research and advisory programs to support the viability and sustainability of Australian agriculture.

**WITNESSES**

**CROMPTON, Mrs Heather, Immediate Past President, Institute of Foresters of Australia ..... 1**

**O'LOUGHLIN, Mr Adrian, Executive Director, Institute of Foresters of Australia ..... 1**



**Committee met at 5.15 pm****CROMPTON, Mrs Heather, Immediate Past President, Institute of Foresters of Australia****O'LOUGHLIN, Mr Adrian, Executive Director, Institute of Foresters of Australia**

**CHAIR (Mr Schultz)**—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry for its inquiry into rural skills training and research. This is the inquiry's seventh public hearing as part of its extensive program of public hearings and visits designed to gather information from those who are directly involved with its main issues.

I welcome representatives from the Institute of Foresters Australia. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament; consequently, they warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. It is customary to remind witnesses that the giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of parliament. Do you wish to make a brief statement in relation to your submission, or would you care to make some introductory remarks?

**Mrs Crompton**—I would like to make an introductory comment.

**CHAIR**—Certainly.

**Mrs Crompton**—On behalf of the Institute of Foresters of Australia, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee. The institute represents professional foresters in Australia. These are the important points I think you should note from the submission together with other ideas I have thought about. There are falling enrolments in forestry courses due to cost and unpopularity—in particular, with students going to their hometown universities. More institutions than ever before are offering courses, with six universities in Australia now offering forestry. There is increasing pressure for forestry courses to be shortened from four to three years. Scholarships are few and small. Most Australian universities now offer a three-year environmental science course, which some would see as a substitute for forestry. With expanding plantations, the demand for foresters is rising and, with the demand exceeding the supply, there has been overseas recruiting—not only by Australia but by places like New Zealand and Canada. Training institutions are struggling to resource comprehensive forestry training. In addition, employers do not seem to be proactive in addressing these problems.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. Mr O'Loughlin, would you like to make a comment?

**Mr O'Loughlin**—I emphasise two points. As has been mentioned, forestry is unpopular. Our professional people are finding that they have to absorb some of the burden of the radical forestry element and it is not a good image for forestry. As you would realise, that has some effect on recruitment of people into forestry. I also emphasise that we believe that not everything falls to government and the industry has not realised necessarily that there are these problems. It knows that there are recruitment problems, but I do not know whether it knows about the underlying problem. The industry is recruiting from overseas and is getting people, but it does

not realise that we need to be careful and ensure that our infrastructure does not disappear; if it does, it will mean that the industry will have further problems in the longer term.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much. For the benefit of the committee, would you describe the registered professional forester program and, more specifically, what it involves, its shortcomings and what is needed for it to be retained?

**Mr O’Loughlin**—A registered foresters program was set up with roughly \$50,000 of government funding from DAFA—if I can use that term—with the idea that it would improve the profession itself. That is, the professional, being recognised or registered, would have to abide by a code of professional ethics. They have to undergo a certain amount of professional development each year and be assessed and reference checked—at least one person checks another’s claims and then someone else ensures that the evidence and so on are correct. Then an independent external auditor checks the scheme every year or two to see that it is all being carried out as it should be.

The scheme itself is not restricted to any particular category, so people can nominate their own category. It is quite different from some areas and specialties where there are standard specialties. This scheme allows people to claim that they have special skills in a certain area and have had those skills assessed and approved. A person may have a speciality in, say, plantation management at the moment, or have had for 10 years. But over the next 10 years they might perhaps move into a regulatory area, and this allows them to move and still have some form of certification and assessment that shows they are current in the specialty in which they have been registered. The uptake of the scheme has not been anywhere near as high as we thought it would be.

**CHAIR**—What are the reasons for that?

**Mr O’Loughlin**—I would say the reason is: ‘What’s in it for me?’ It has to be recognised and accepted by the whole industry. We have not gone out strongly to employers, and I blame a lack of resources and time for that. We have of course written to employers, but we have never got around to knocking on doors and things like that. I think there also needs to be that groundswell: we need to get in a certain number of the right people and then others will follow. We have started our second stage of advertising in periodicals, asking employers to employ RPFs, or suggesting that they employ RPFs, that they certainly should look at them. That has caused a bit of comment among those who are not RPF. So it is hurting a little, and I believe we will therefore get some people to come in. They are starting to see some of the leaders of the industry get their RPF. I am talking mainly about industry. In government regulation we see a lesser interest, but we are working on some people in government to apply in the regulatory sense. I think that would also show some standing.

We have had about 35 approved so far, but the applications are dribbling in. We are working on those two edges: (1) to be more active now with employers, and we are starting to work on that; and (2) to get a bit more of that peer pressure applied to see whether we can get somewhere. We have been a bit despondent about it and did not know whether we would continue. But at this stage we are continuing because we do not believe we have gone far enough and tried all the avenues yet.



**CHAIR**—Why haven't the employers picked up on that? Are they getting people from outside to come in rather than looking around for suitable people?

**Mr O'Loughlin**—I think employers are so short of staff that they will take anyone. They are not specifying that you need to be a RPF. Probably one of the problems with RPF is that the tendency is for people to ask for specialisation; therefore, you fit only certain employment categories. But there is not a lot out there either to provide them with. We have to be careful that we do not break any discrimination laws when people apply. We cannot say, 'You must have an RPF' or get employers to advertise that a person must have RPF.

**Mr ADAMS**—Why not?

**Mr TUCKEY**—You do not ask for a doctor who is not properly qualified, or a specialist who is not properly qualified.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—There is always a lot of resistance, certainly in government, to the need to specify that you belong to an institution. We have overcome that by recently making RPF available to non-institute members, and we hope that will help.

**Mr TUCKEY**—As I said, not being a member of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons does not stop someone saying, 'I'm an eye surgeon.' I am wondering why that is a discrimination issue. It should not be, in my mind.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—We are finding resistance—

**Mr TUCKEY**—Internal resistance is a different thing. The discrimination authority should not pick on an employer who says, 'RPF preferred,' if it represents a higher qualification.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—No, I am not arguing that. We are asking now why they do not insist that they must have their RPF. People are saying 'we will insist on it' and do not use the words 'must have', as it is a bit strong. We are on a learning curve on that. We are a small organisation and we have only put out a few adverts. It has cost about \$6,000 of our members' funds. We are looking at pushing it. The next stage certainly is to go to the employer. With due respect to what you are saying, we will probably get feedback from the employers, because the only employers I have are members of the board and perhaps a couple of government officials who have other restrictions.

**CHAIR**—Have you approached the employers for a contribution towards the advertising? After all, aren't you chasing the people for the industry?

**Mr O'Loughlin**—Yes. I would say we have not had a very close liaison with the industry. I suppose there is always the sensitivity of the role of a professional organisation. There is NAFI, which is the industry body. Our institute has always been very sensitive about not cutting across the industry lines. We are working closer now with the new NAFI person, Catherine Murphy, than we have in the past. Of course, that is not a personal thing; she has just helped us move a bit closer. Education and training is one area that we are going to have a meeting on to make sure we are going down the same path. There is a particular project for which they have received

government funding. We said, 'We would not apply, but we will do it for you,' and we jointly prepared that submission.

**Mr TUCKEY**—I think it would be of interest to remember a meeting you chaired this morning. The forest plantation industry is lobbying the parliament very heavily about its continued tax treatment. I think this would be a very good time for someone to suggest to them that a bit more generosity in terms of forestry training, and scholarships in particular, would be a good PR stunt. Further to that, the Gunnensen people even fund an intern—or whatever they call that person—at Portland. That has been going on for years, and they have virtually done that on their own. It is a fact that they should be investing in the people they need most. I would have thought the plantation sector would have a bigger demand for foresters per 1,000 trees than the natural forests.

There are groups like the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, which was historically the principle employer of foresters because it managed the forests. As minister I started to get a feel some years ago that the National Parks and Wildlife Service thought of a forester as a dreadful person. I think if it had taken foresters' advice years ago, half the forest would not have burned down. You might like to comment on the extent to which government, in all its shades, is creating employment opportunities and assisting through scholarships. I think it is tragic that there is this image of a forester as a dreadful person, which is far from the truth.

**Mrs Crompton**—I think that has changed over the years. When I did forestry, there were a large number of students who were funded by state owned scholarships—

**Mr TUCKEY**—They used to get cadetships, didn't they?

**Mrs Crompton**—Scholarships, cadetships—I do not see much difference between them. There were perhaps four or five from each state that had scholarships. My class had 80 students in it. When you have classes of that size, there is no need to fund scholarships; you can come in and pick the cream at the end of the four years. It has reached the stage now where the supply is not meeting the demand, and it is perhaps time to think about scholarships again.

**Mr TUCKEY**—The cadetship option—which, of course could be a scholarship where there is some on-the-ground activity over the university recess and that—just comes to me. That was a hell of a good scheme.

**Mr ADAMS**—We have evidence from other areas of people going to the sexy environmental sciences. The mining industry and the agricultural sciences have got a problem. You have reinforced that a bit. But we have got natural resource management issues that are starting to come up. The plantation sector is getting bigger and will continue to grow in that sense—more than native forests and things. With these new avenues as well—picking up some of the environmental sciences—a forester has an enormous number of skills. Is the content of degree courses changing or picking up other stuff? Maybe you comment on that for us, as well as on the competencies when they come out.

**Mrs Crompton**—I can speak for the ANU particularly because I live and work in this town and I am more familiar with it. It is my old university. The course is changing and I think not for the better. For example, Professor Philip Evans, who was formally the university's lecturer in

wood science, moved to the University of British Columbia. He returns to Australia for a couple of weeks each year to teach a course. There is no-one else in Australia who can teach that course. When I was at university, we did engineering, surveying, wood science and hydrology. The university now does not have the full-time staff to teach those courses anymore and I think that that is quite detrimental. We have companies in the industry like Lignor establishing in Western Australia. When I mentioned this to Professor Phil Evans, he said: 'It'll be a shame because there won't be anyone in Australia who will be able to provide the technical backup for those sorts of processing plants.' Similarly, there may be shortages in those sorts of technical areas in a pulp and paper mill. They are the sorts of specialist skills that they may need to recruit from overseas whereas perhaps several years ago they could have been resourced from Australia.

**Mr ADAMS**—It is a pretty disturbing trend.

**Mrs Crompton**—Also the courses are changing in that it is expensive. Forestry was always very much a field based learning course. Given the expense of students having to travel extensively to look at forest operations in other states and given that students now have huge HECS debts to pay at the end and they are sometimes employed part-time during their courses to be able to survive the four years while they are at university, it is really quite tough being a student. Adding to those additional costs things that would really enhance their training is something that the providers of the courses are really concerned about.

**Mr TUCKEY**—But, again, that whole cadet concept provided that; they got a wage, even while they were at university. I think you would recommend that we should recommend that that should be revisited, particularly from the private sector. The southern forests, or whatever they are called, are declaring \$40 million or \$50 million profits. It is not as though they are down to their last dollar. I have a daughter who is a veterinarian. The process is that you do a science degree over three years; then you continue on and do veterinary science with another two years. Can you see any structure like that that would be beneficial? When you talk hydrology in this day and age, that is about as applicable to trees as anything you could think of. Have you any advice to us on how they might have their cake and eat it too?

**Mrs Crompton**—That is certainly one of the suggestions that has been made by Professor Vanclay from Southern Cross University: you do a postgraduate type two-year training course. The current professors of forestry in Australia in their wisdom are suggesting that it is not the best way to teach forestry. I think we get entrenched in doing things a particular way and become reluctant to make changes and explore different options. Also, these problems that we are talking about are not just problems of forestry; they are problems of the whole of society. These problems include the ageing population and fewer recruits coming into the work force. It is happening to all the other professions as well. I think we should perhaps look more broadly than just at forestry to see whether there are other professions doing things in another way that we may learn from.

**Mr TUCKEY**—You could earn more than a doctor driving a truck in the Pilbara. It creates a new dimension.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—We are competing against other courses that are more glamorous or perhaps are perceived to be more glamorous. Environmental courses take three years. It takes a bit of selling.

**Mr TUCKEY**—I think that is a message for industry.

**Mrs Crompton**—Someone has to pay.

**CHAIR**—It is not just foresters; it should be the industry as a whole, as well as everybody.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—Your submission expressed some concern—for example, in Melbourne—about reducing the length of the course from four to three years. Conversely, we have just heard an announcement in Melbourne about reducing the automotive mechanical apprenticeship from four to three years. Is it possible to reduce the length of the degree? You talk about the cost of HECS and things like that. Is it possible to streamline it to make it more attractive to young people?

**Mr O'Loughlin**—It has been in Melbourne.

**Mrs Crompton**—I think it is still four years.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—Melbourne actually cut out the course two years ago. It was claimed that it was quite an expensive course compared to many others. They did not compare it with the medical profession or similar. They compared it with an agricultural area, which I suppose is a fair comparison. The dean pointed out that the way it was run made it the dearest course. They actually just cut the course out and they were not going to replace it with anything at all. Ironically, the students revolted and the institute also went down and spoke to the dean. It took quite a lot of pressure to change it.

**Mr ADAMS**—Did they cut it back to three years?

**Mr O'Loughlin**—No, it is three years plus one practical.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—In your documentation, you state that the committee should:

... investigate options for change to tertiary education in forestry to better meet the national need by, for example, financially assisting the Primary Industries Ministerial Council's Forestry and Forest Products Committee's deliberations on this topic;

Surely, state and territory ministers and the Commonwealth would be prepared to finance such work, because that is the key to their future. Are you saying that they are not prepared to put the money into doing this type of curriculum work?

**Mr O'Loughlin**—We touched earlier on the role of the state governments. Their role has been very disappointing. I went to them for funding for our journal. The amount we were talking about was really only petty cash. When I sought \$70,000 each year for three years on a project, it caused quite a lot of consternation. When you talk about the attitude of state government, I found that not many of the people I dealt with in state government were foresters. When I spoke to them, I said: 'This is the only peer review journal in forestry in Australia. We will lose this if you are not careful. Everyone else has gone. Our members are paying for it, can you help us? We need to update.' Probably 40 per cent of the people I was talking to were not foresters. They came from some other background, but they were heading forestry departments and they

represent the states on the Forests and Forest Products Committee, which is the old primary council we spoke about. They are finding that they are not as effective as they used to be.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—You are arguing that the ministerial council should have a thorough look at curriculum and try to work out a new approach nationally across the states and territories.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—Yes, we think that they are a body that could be doing this, but they are saying that they are not funded to do it. We are saying that if they are not funded, we would be happy to do something, but we do not have anywhere near the resources of the states and the Commonwealth at the agency level. We believe that that is an area that they should be strongly addressing as agencies for each state. They should be bringing it together on a national basis.

**CHAIR**—What I am hearing is creating a problem for me. There seems to be a lack of will from both the industry and governments to recognise a need in the industry, and nobody seems to want to convey the message, either individually or collectively, of the seriousness of the shortage. I suppose it gets back to marketing. How do we market the needs of the industry so that we can make people sit up and listen? The industry covers a wide diversity of related areas—doing the scientific work to get the tree stock, growing the trees, harvesting the trees and putting the trees through the mills, or whatever you do with the end result. They all seem to be individually focused on their own needs, resulting in the lack of skills that is now being highlighted by what you are telling us today.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—That is a fair assessment. That is why we are getting more involved. We try to get a little bit of money here and there if we can, but basically we operate through our members' funds. They come from all walks of life, of course, from academics to people who are in the industry, and that is the message we are getting. We have a meeting next week. We are going to try and work closely with NAFI. We are saying someone has to do something, so NAFI will be getting some statistics and other things going and then we will look at the work force and education to go with that. In our small way we are going to try and do something and apply some pressures. I suppose in being here today we are saying that this is something that needs attention. We are looking at trying to address it, but this is just a start. I think we have been stuck back too much through lack of resources in our organisation, and now marketing has become a top priority. We have a little bit of money there that we can use to do something.

**Mrs Crompton**—It would help if the industry was a bit more unified. It is represented by 30-something organisations or associations, and, until they can come together and speak with one voice, I believe it is going to be very difficult to market forestry.

**CHAIR**—Mr Tuckey made a very pertinent point. We had one section of the industry at a backbench advisory committee meeting this morning, and they were focused on getting tax cuts for their industry.

**Mr TUCKEY**—Retaining tax cuts.

**CHAIR**—All they are worried about is growing the trees and getting tax cuts. They are not worried about what happens to the trees afterwards. It is disgraceful.

**Mr TUCKEY**—They are plantation people. Their tax cuts are coming up for review—there is a sunset clause. I have a few thoughts I would like to put to the committee when we go back into private session.

**Mr FORREST**—What is the name of the bachelors degree for a typical—

**Mrs Crompton**—I have a Bachelor of Science (Forestry).

**Mr O’Loughlin**—In Victoria it is a Bachelor of Forest Science.

**Mrs Crompton**—It differs between universities. There are basically three main forestry courses: at Southern Cross University, the ANU and the University of Melbourne. The University of Tasmania, Edith Cowan University and the University of Queensland are also offering forestry, but it may be to only one or two students in each of those locations, so they are hardly viable forestry training courses.

**Mr O’Loughlin**—I do not know what they are calling it. I have not met a graduate yet.

**Mr FORREST**—The reason I ask that question is that in my own engineering degree at the University of Melbourne you did a bachelor of engineering (civil), (mechanical), (agricultural) or whatever. I remember the foresters were part of the process in the first few years. So for the first few years we were all in together. We did—

**Mrs Crompton**—General science.

**Mr FORREST**—basic engineering 101 or something, and then in the last two years we specialised. The civil engineers would go away and do some structures and the mechanical engineers would go and do something else, such as thermodynamics. Does that happen in this process? That would make it much easier for the universities to provide the lecturing support through a broader brush, and the specialisation would not come in until later. So when you finished you would have a Bachelor of Science (Veterinary), a Bachelor of Science (Forestry) or whatever else is offered. That would be one way we might be able to direct the outcome.

**Mrs Crompton**—Forestry at the ANU certainly started off with a general first year of science, and second, third and fourth year were forestry. I am not quite sure how they run it now, because the geography school merged with the foresters, so it is quite a different set-up.

**Mr O’Loughlin**—I think there are still a lot of common courses—which happens at all universities, really. There would still be a couple of subjects on forestry. They do not stream into it; they start off in the first year. But they have a lot of common classes. They are doing that to a degree. There are still a few where they start off in the first year with Elements of Forestry or something like that, but they are also doing chemistry and other science subjects in common classes.

At the start of the year when we have our meeting with the students here in the ACT, there are about 50 students, and when we approach them for membership of the institute we find that a maximum of 10 to 15 are doing forestry and all the rest are doing allied courses that have similar sciences and the like. In the final years they go over to full-time forestry.

**Mr FORREST**—One of the beauties of it is that you can switch at different stages. You can be three years through your degree and suddenly there is a shortage of foresters, so you go and do that one, knowing that you will get a good financial outcome when you are finished, or you switch to veterinary science or something like that. Is that the way the training operates?

**Mrs Crompton**—At some stage you are going to have to have a basic set of courses that you have studied and passed to be able to call yourself a forester. The university establishes that, or the Institute of Foresters establishes that these are the minimum requirements of someone that is called a forester.

**Mr ADAMS**—How do we stack up internationally? Are we as good as the rest of the world in the quality of forestry training?

**Mr O'Loughlin**—Yes. A lot of the work of our consultants is overseas.

**Mr FORREST**—Your submission says that, actually.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—We have even been losing some to Indonesia. Today there was someone who advertised four times over three years for someone in bushfire management. They are bringing someone in from Portugal.

**CHAIR**—We are importing from a limited gene pool, if I could put it that way, and we are not doing enough to top up the gene pool.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—You would think we would be qualified in bushfire management.

**Mr WINDSOR**—You mentioned in your introductory remarks 'a radical forestry element'. Could you go back to that?

**Mr O'Loughlin**—I was talking about greenies, I suppose—anyone who is climbing trees and jumping in front of tractors. We are not talking about their views or expressing a personal opinion or anything. We are saying that there is an element out there who do get a lot of TV time, and it is not good for the profession.

**Mr WINDSOR**—And that is causing a negative image—

**Mr O'Loughlin**—A lot of those people are about that age. They are university students and they are at that age. That is all I meant. It was a matter of expression.

**Mr WINDSOR**—You do not have to be polite. My second question is in relation to salaries. Who are your people competing with in terms of the money market?

**Mrs Crompton**—You get back to the stage of students entering university. A lot of them are looking at dollars income at the end of it. I guess there are fashions. The IT industry was really booming and I think that has dropped off a bit. Foresters have never been in the elite class of earners.

**Mr TUCKEY**—Let me say, nor has vet science if you take a job in it. I know it is some years ago, but my daughter started on \$25,000 a year, on wages, after five years at university. It is probably about \$30,000 today. They all think it is a glamorous job and they all line up for it, but, unless you get into private practice, it is not well remunerated.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—I do not think people are necessarily leaving forestry. Some are, but no more than in most other areas. When they get out into the forest environment, in employment, I believe they enjoy it.

**Mr TUCKEY**—It is a great job.

**CHAIR**—What can government do, in your view, to (a) stimulate universities to offer more courses that are conducive to the industry and (b) assist in helping with industry's input into marketing and selling the profession as a good career path?

**Mrs Crompton**—The university question is really broad-brush. It is not just about forestry; it is about doing university at all. It is expensive; it is likely to become elitist; and kids end up with huge HECS debts to pay at the time of their lives when they are thinking about marriage, families and all of those sorts of things. So, whatever you do for the whole university question in solving those problems, you will help foresters.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—Is there a TAFE based forestry course, like an apprenticeship?

**Mrs Crompton**—Yes. There are several small ones. There is the tree growers course—there are several.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—There are bits and pieces everywhere.

**Mrs Crompton**—Particularly farm forestry. People who own land and want to have some forests on their land can—

**CHAIR**—There used to be TAFE courses at Tumut in relation to machinery use and all of that.

**Mr TUCKEY**—Yes.

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—That is for six months accreditation and things like that.

**Mr TUCKEY**—Mr Chair, in approaching this matter, it occurs to me that this committee should seek some evidence from the ANU, which has had a pretty well established course. There is two-way traffic in these things. Often, when they come and tell us their hard luck story, other ideas might materialise. Secondly, I thought we should ask NAFI or someone else to talk to us with the purpose of maybe delivering a reverse message.

**Mrs Crompton**—Am I allowed to ask a question?

**CHAIR**—Yes, sure.



**Mrs Crompton**—I looked through the list of submissions today and I did not notice submissions from any of the three main forestry teaching universities. Is that true?

**Mr FORREST**—We got one from the University of Melbourne, but it was pathetic.

**Mrs Crompton**—I would have expected that they would be keenly interested in submitting something, apart from through the institute that also represents them.

**CHAIR**—All the more reason why we should pick up the suggestion just made by Mr Tuckey.

**Mr FORREST**—They have not shown a great deal of interest at all. I was very disappointed.

**CHAIR**—We should target them and ask them to forward a submission.

**Mr TUCKEY**—The ANU is the second biggest school, I suppose.

**Mrs Crompton**—The University of Melbourne and the ANU are pretty much of a muchness. Probably even Southern Cross has similar numbers.

**Mr TUCKEY**—I see them as being in Canberra, what is more.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—You would get more sense out of ANU. They support the course. Melbourne is doing it a bit begrudgingly.

**Mr FORREST**—Typically University of Melbourne.

**Mr ADAMS**—I would suggest that when we talk about what is sexy and what is not that this goes right to the heart of the thing that we are talking about here: forestry is seen as something, from a university perspective, that is old hat or is not being done properly or whatever, because of the politics around it, and that has affected some of the ways that it is being looked at from a university council perspective.

**Mr TUCKEY**—Historically, there was only one university in Australia that was deemed free, and that was the University of WA, because of the very large bequests that it had received. It was not really free. In those days, employers considered it almost imperative to offer cadetships. You made the point that we went through the phase when I think everyone walked away from that, because it was free and then government discovered they could not manage that, so HECS was invented, and we can argue about that until we are blue in the face. With the new competition from non-academic workplaces, the true message that has come to me today is that industry per se—and, in this case, the forestry industries—and governments, with their associated efforts, have got to get back into cadetships. We are doing it with doctors to get them in the country.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—IFA in fact said that the cadetships are too old a term.

**Mr TUCKEY**—It worked pretty well.

**Mr O'Loughlin**—We are really saying scholarships in whatever form.

**Mr TUCKEY**—But a cadetship was a cadetship. You were an employee whose boss sent you to university.

**Mr O’Loughlin**—That was what I was raised on.

**Mr TUCKEY**—You did not go to the Gold Coast come the lengthy breaks; you went back to the office or down to the forest. Again, it is for us to discuss at a different time.

**CHAIR**—It has just been pointed out to me that probably the reason that we have not had some submissions from universities and some of these others is because the terms of reference refer to agriculture. Perhaps we should say: ‘Forestry is part of agriculture and there have been some concerns raised in evidence taken that the universities have not made a submission. Would you consider doing so?’

**Mr MARTIN FERGUSON**—Plus, I think, NAFI and the three ‘p’s: plantation, pulp and paper employers.

**CHAIR**—Could we take that on board through the secretariat?

**Mr O’Loughlin**—Just on cadetships, I feel that that would help keep people in the rural area so you do not lose them so much to the city. They are popping home all the time. They still have the social life at home rather than going down to the big city. So I think cadetships are a way, but it is a matter of the language.

**Mr TUCKEY**—It probably has wider implications for this entire inquiry. It was an accepted practice in all sorts of places. Again, they paid your university fees and they thought it was a good investment. I think it was.

**Mrs Crompton**—They are currently doing it for medicine. There are no work commitments, I don’t think, so they are scholarships rather than cadetships.

**Mr TUCKEY**—We are providing scholarships in that regard to make people go bush, and things like that. But that is slightly different, as I said, particularly for these plantation companies. And they are totally dependent on government.

**Mrs Crompton**—I just think it is really in industry’s interests to be supporting the future of their industry a lot more than they are.

**Mr TUCKEY**—It changes the balance. They say: ‘Do I go and work in the Pilbara and amass a lot of money and come back with virtually no job? Suddenly, I can afford to go to university if I get a job with Great Southern Plantations, Timbercorp or Gunnersen.’ As I said, Gunnersen, to my knowledge, have funded this position. It is for a qualified person but they send a person over there to write a paper or something important. I would imagine that that costs them quite a lot of money, and they continue to do it. But there are all these other timber companies. I am wondering what Johnny Gay does. We will have to talk to him.

**Mr ADAMS**—There are a few around Gunns and there are a fair few around forestry in Tasmania.

**CHAIR**—Does anybody have any further questions?

**Mr TUCKEY**—No. That has been very helpful.

**Mr O’Loughlin**—I would like to table this for you, if you like. It is some statistics of the ages of people of our membership, which reflect the industry.

**CHAIR**—Yes.

**Mr ADAMS**—It is an ageing membership?

**Mr O’Loughlin**—Yes.

**Mr TUCKEY**—Like farmers.

**CHAIR**—Thank you very much for your contribution. The evidence taken, if nothing else, has highlighted a very serious issue. More importantly, it has alerted us to the fact that—and I am not making excuses for other sections of the industry—the interpretation of the terms of reference of the inquiry may have pushed them away from making submissions to the inquiry. I am quite happy to sign a letter to send to these groups saying: ‘Some concerns have been raised that your section of the industry has made absolutely no submission to the inquiry, yet we are hearing evidence that you have got severe problems in terms of shortage of qualified foresters within the industry. Please consider sending in a submission.’

**Mr O’Loughlin**—We would appreciate that.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Tuckey**):

That the committee authorises the publication of evidence given before it at a public hearing this day.

**Committee adjourned at 6.00 pm**