

Submission to 'Rural skills training and research'

I would prefer not to have my name published if possible.

In regard to rural skills training, I would like to suggest that for many people working on the land, their greatest needs are to 1, understand better what they are doing, so that they can do it better, and 2, to gain qualifications that can allow them to move onward later as the need arises.

We also have a problem in allowing the knowledge of older rural workers to be lost, especially in relation to conditions, environment, weather and previous events and 'what happened when they tried this and that last time'.

I therefore suggest that perhaps there might be a way forward for all of this, whereby people working in rural industries can enrol (probably through TAFE) in a course that is locked to the area and property they are working on. They work the traditional types of units, but all assignments are based on their particular property and enterprises (or proposed enterprises).

I envisage each subject would run a full 12 months, and the final result would be based on a full year report on that property, for that particular topic. Thus, if the 'subject' were soils, then the student would complete a full analysis of soil (at the level they are studying) for that farm, with seasonal changes and conditions etc. If it were cattle management, then it would follow the cattle on that property and what is done with them and why and the outcomes. Plus of course the legislative requirement to be considered in each case.

This work would not be lecture based in any way, but based on real life assignments and research relating to that particular farm, and also in information gleaned from those who have had experience on that particular property. Possibly comparing the practices in use with the advice being offered and discussing the difference.

Since in any one year, there would be few people in any particular area doing the same subjects, then it would be beneficial if the people concerned were able to meet just once for each subject for each state probably.

However, in any one area, it would be beneficial if all those studying at any level and any subject met occasionally to discuss the process of learning and research, and to possibly briefly present what they were working on.

The result of such a process would be that the person studying would develop an in-depth understanding of their particular operation, and alternatives to what is being done now, and hopefully an understanding of where the management has come from and what has been tried. This could be tied to actual qualifications to be of use later in life, while being of practical benefit in their current work. It would also allow discussion with older farmers to collect and record their management practices and hopefully distill out that which is useful.

In addition, it would provide a social outlet (even when only by electronic means for most of the time) in discussing the progress of the assignments

These are just some thoughts