

M I N T R A C

NATIONAL MEAT INDUSTRY TRAINING ADVISORY COUNCIL LIMITED

The Secretary
Standing Committee on Education and Training
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600



PROCESSING

Dear Mr Selth

Re: Inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools

Please find attached the meat industry's submission to the inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools.



SMALLGOODS

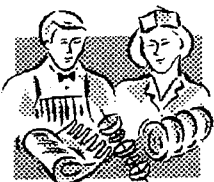
Labour turnover – attracting and retaining workers is one of the biggest problems in the meat industry and the industry is keen to set up and implement VET in schools programs in meat processing plants

Please contact me if you require more detailed information.

Kind regards

Margaret Tayar

Margaret Tayar
Executive Officer



RETAIL

451 LYONS ROAD FIVE DOCK NSW 2046 PH: (02) 9713 7639 FAX: (02) 9713 7614
ABN NO. 28 058 494 063

Email Address: mintrac@mintrac.com.au Website: mintrac.com.au

Summary response

The Australian Meat Industry includes registered export and domestic meat processing, food service and smallgoods establishments and meat retailing outlets including the traditional shops and meat departments in supermarkets.

The meat processing sector of the industry is the largest, employing 43,000 and is based in regional and remote Australia. Meat processing plants are often the largest employer in country towns and have strong links with the local community. Over the past few years, the meat processing sector has concentrated on improving the perception of the industry in the general community. Many companies have introduced and developed career pathways supported by structured training and qualifications and conducted information sessions for local schools and career teachers.

In recent times the Australian Meat Industry has participated in a range of vocational education programs for young people – vocational education and training units in senior secondary school programs, part-time traineeships and apprenticeships in schools, pre-employment programs and industry mentoring programs. These programs have had varying degrees of success.

However a range of factors has prevented strong industry take up of such programs. These factors include:

- occupational health and safety issues
- regulatory requirements relating to the processing of meat for human consumption
- the selection of appropriate units for VET in schools training programs
- the lack of industry qualifications and experience of teachers in the school system
- the limited flexibility of the school system to accommodate work experience/employment and training outside traditional school hours
- a lack of national consistency in the processes and requirements for the development and implementation of appropriate VET in schools programs
- the confusion around (and often inadequacy of) funding for appropriate training support, including partnerships with RTOs
- continuing difficulties with recruitment and the reluctance of careers teachers to promote some areas of the meat industry as a positive career pathway.

The industry sees VET in schools as an extension of the career pathways for the meat industry. While some of these factors are outside the scope of the industry to resolve, the industry take up of VET in schools programs would increase if the industry was guaranteed that such programs would:

- strictly monitor the occupational health and safety of the participants by:
 - restricting VET in schools participants to particular jobs, equipment and areas of the plant
 - requiring the inclusion of participants in Q fever vaccination programs
- be limited to particular career pathways which pose less risk to young people who are not work hardened (many jobs in the industry are physically demanding, potentially dangerous and conducted at a very fast pace over long hours)

- accommodate the operating hours of the industry (based on a wide range of shifts) and the need to provide 'real' jobs and tasks as part of on the job training
- include a range of Certificate III qualifications and units in non part time traineeship options for VET in schools programs.

The range, structure, resourcing and delivery of vocational education programs in schools, including teacher training and the impact of vocational education on other programs

Range and structure

There is no doubt that for individual companies and young people, the success of any VET in schools program depends on local factors. However, for any industry wide acceptance of such programs, a national approach is required.

The diversity of program structures and requirements across all states and territories is perplexing and frustrating. Many meat processing companies with sites in several states have to negotiate their way through different sets of requirements. Some states recognise school based part time meat processing traineeships and other states do not. Some recognise apprenticeships, but not traineeships.

In one instance, a meat processing company with plants in two regional centres, has approached the relevant state authority and minister seeking clarification about requirements for recognition of a VET in schools, school based traineeship program. One year and nine months later, the company is yet to receive clarification.

At present, there are no VET in schools programs for the meat industry other than school based traineeships/apprenticeships. This limits the options for young people to Certificate II and therefore limits their career pathways. The industry would welcome the inclusion of selected units of competence from Certificate III programs, such as laboratory and meat safety. Incorporation of some of these units would assist the delivery of off the job training, as they can be conducted away from the plant. Many units, because of the requirements of the *Australian Standard for the Processing and Transportation of Meat for Human Consumption 2002* must be conducted on plant and on the job.

The industry acceptance of VET in schools programs is not limited to meat industry qualifications. Many positions in the meat industry require non-meat specific technical skills such as business administration, laboratory skills and traditional trades such as plumbing and fitting and turning. These would provide young people with a broader range of options within the meat industry, the broader food processing industry and a range of manufacturing and bio-tech industries.

Table one: Approved VET in schools programs, meat industry specific

State or Territory	School based traineeships/apprenticeships	VET in schools programs
Victoria	Nil	Nil
New South Wales	Meat retailing * prohibited in abattoirs	Nil
South Australia	Nil	Nil
Queensland	Meat processing Meat retailing	Nil
Tasmania	Nil	Nil
Western Australia	Nil	Nil
ACT	Nil	Nil
Northern Territory	Nil	Nil

Delivery and teacher training

One barrier to industry participation in part time traineeships and apprenticeships is the limited flexibility of the school to accommodate industry operating hours and the need to give trainees experience in real jobs and tasks. This creates difficulties for small and medium enterprises taking on a small number of young people as trainees or for work experience.

For example, one meat processing company with two young people as part time trainees developed a program where the participants could job share a real job, rather than be given limited tasks on a week by week basis. The trainees were to alternate weeks of three and two days on the job with two and three days at school. The trainees would experience the whole job over a two week period with no disruption to plant operations as the position was filled (by one or other of the trainees) all week.

However, the school system was not able to accommodate the young person's rotating participation in school subjects. The RTO was also unable to accommodate support for the off the job training, other than through self paced learning.

The qualifications of teachers and trainers in VET in school programs is also of concern to the industry. School teachers rarely have meat industry qualifications and experience and are unable to offer even general support for young people. Where schools take on the responsibility for the off the job training, the quality of the training must be in questions. As well, there are a limited number of qualified trainers and assessors in registered training organisations, and these are not always available to work with a single trainee in a single location. In many instances the off the job training is limited to self paced workbooks or any help the employer is able to provide. Employers are generally not funded for this task or responsibility.

The meat industry would recommend negotiation of formal partnerships with companies in VET in school programs for the provision of off the job training and appropriate reimbursement.

Alternative models, where schools accommodate block release for induction training, including on and off the job training should also be considered.

The industry also recommends that teachers from schools undertaking meat industry VET in schools programs also undertake familiarisation programs, in order to provide effective support to young people in these programs.

Occupational Health and Safety

The single major concern for the industry is occupational health and safety. The meat processing industry is physically demanding, requires high concentration levels, complex skills, speed and the ability to work safely with a wide range of potentially dangerous equipment and materials. This includes hand held knives, much mechanically operated equipment such as bandsaws, cutters, knives and mincers, work in chillers and very low temperatures and use of hot water and chemicals. As well, workers in the industry are often exposed to zoonotic diseases such as Q fever.

The meat industry has made major advances in its management of occupational health and safety. It is clear however, that young people attending work for only one or two days a week (including off the job training) take much longer to develop competence in the use of dangerous equipment and material and must remain under close supervision for some time. The policy of rotation through jobs to minimise injury further slows the development of competence.

The meat industry therefore recommends that meat industry VET in schools programs be strictly monitored and controlled and that young people be restricted in the range of tasks and jobs they are able to undertake. This will require careful selection of the units of competence to be included in such training programs.

The differences between school-based and other vocational education programs and the resulting qualifications, and the pattern of industry acceptance of school-based programs

Industry acceptance

The numbers of young people involved in meat industry VET in schools is low but has potential to grow. The industry acceptance of VET in schools programs is not limited to meat industry qualifications. Many positions in the meat industry require non-meat specific technical skills such as business administration, laboratory skills and traditional trades such as plumbing and fitting and turning.

Industry acceptance of meat specific VET in school programs varies, and is dependant on the resolution of the issues identified above. Acceptance is stronger in the meat retailing industry, where the size of the business and the nature of the work means that individual employers are better able to provide the level of supervision required. The meat retail industry has also had long experience with models of block release or one day a week release of apprentices.

Where these issues have been resolved, the industry has utilised school based traineeships with positive results. On plant in Queensland has involved 37 school based trainees, including indigenous young people and young people with disabilities.

Appendix one: School based apprenticeships in the meat retail industry

Gleeson Quality Meats Pty Ltd

The team at Gleeson Quality Meats includes a school based trainee undertaking a two year, part-time school based traineeship in meat retailing. On completion the trainee will be awarded the Certificate II Meat Processing (Meat Retailing) and be eligible to complete the Certificate III trade qualification.

The trainee is employed by a group training company, works at Gleeson Quality Meats for one day a week, attends school four days a week and undertakes training with an RTO. The trainee is paid at the relevant award rate. Currently the trainee attends work on the busiest day of the week but the manager is keen to change the roster next year, to give the trainee a broader experience across the meat retailing business. The training will include breaking down beef, making sausages, value adding and customer service. The RTO visits the part-time trainee at the workplace to conduct the training and assessment.

One of the attractions of the program for Gleeson's is that part-time trainees are keen to complete their education *and* develop job skills. They are not in the scheme to avoid learning and get a job – any job. Part-time trainees have career aspirations and because of this, take every opportunity to develop their work *and* specific industry skills. This pays dividends for the trainee and the business.

Gleeson's are very satisfied with the trainee and who is seen as a valuable part of the team. They are happy to extend his employment at other times, including holiday periods to cover the holidays of other team members.

Gleeson Quality Meats want to take on a second part-time trainee next year and are keen to have a female in the job. There are already two people on the waiting list for next year.

Appendix two: School based apprenticeships in the meat processing industry

Teys Bros (Holdings) Pty Ltd - School Based Traineeships

Teys Bros (Beenleigh) has formed a partnership with what is known as the Beenleigh Industry Training Network (BITN). BITN is a community based network group made of of local business leaders and local high school representatives. Its primary function is to promote and facilitate the take up of school based traineeships by employers in the Beenleigh community.

The network engages a co-ordinator based at one of the high schools who is the contact person between schools, employers, students, parents and other parties who become involved in school based traineeships.

The partnership which has been established between Teys Bros and BITN has proven to be very effective. The process adopted / action plan to recruit school based trainees, which was jointly formulated, included:-

- initial discussion involving BITN, Teys, the RTO and the NAC
- presentations by Teys Bros at schools
- seeking of expression of interest from students

- more specific information sessions with students and their parents regarding company requirements and school requirements, and providing of promotional material.
- arranging of selection interviews, with input from the schools re student references.
- job offers.
- Q fever screening and vaccination, medicals.
- induction training (parents invited) including completion of training contract, and training plan.
- work experience.
- launch of program and publicity in the community and press.
- commencements and monitoring.

Some issues have arisen re school based traineeship employment and BITN have assisted with the resolution of these.

BITN have streamlined and supported the process of recruitment and placement of school based trainees. Teys Bros is attempting to facilitate the setting up of similar Industry Training Networks in other locations where we have processing facilities.

We highly recommend the industry make use of and involvement in ITNs.