North West Agricultural Workforce Plan:
Notes from the Workshop held 16th October 2020



Skills Tasmania

30 October 2020

Overview

A North West Agricultural Workforce Development Plan (the Plan) was developed in early 2020. The Plan identified five key strategies and also actions for industry, government, education and training providers to support growth of a highly skilled and valued agriculture workforce in the North-West region.

This workshop focused on getting industry and stakeholder endorsement and commitment for

* the Plan and its actions; and
* targeted training of 150 people in the agricultural work force in North West Tasmania.

Objectives were to communicate findings from the Workforce Development Plan project and;

* 1. Inform participants of training opportunities for agriculture in Tasmania from primary school through to university
	2. Inform a clear, and industry endorsed, road-map to fund training for 150 workers;
	3. Build industry and stakeholder commitment and networks that foster implementation of targeted training in the short term and the Plan for the medium and longer term

Notes from each Workshop session

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| Workshop Element | Key points and outputs |
| **Education and training options*** + **Ag Education in Schools**
	+ **VET system (TasTAFE)**
	+ **Apprentices and traineeships (MAS)**
	+ **UTas education and training services**
 | This was an informative session providing on overview of training opportunities. Feedback from participants was positive. Many commented that:* + They did not know about the different initiatives and where they could get help / whom to contact
	+ They did not know about funding opportunities for training
	+ They did not know about the many options of training/upskilling people that were employed
	+ They want to be more proactive in the future
 |
| **Examples of making things happen:** | * 1. Burnie Training Hub - Damian Pierce
	2. KEEN – workforce development model - <https://keenpartners.com.au/>
	+ The KEEN model resonated well with the audience and was taken up later in the day when people planned actions
 |
| **Workforce development outcomes the audience collectively wanted to achieve in the medium term** | Participants worked in small groups to brainstorm the desired outcomes. Each group was asked to nominate their top three or four outcomes. These were then grouped into themes as listed below. This grouping/theming was undertaken by the facilitators due to time constrains. Some variation is therefore possible from what participants intended versus the facilitators’ interpretation. The five themes strongly aligned with the focus areas from The Plan (refer to Appendix 1). Outcomes grouped under each theme were as follows.**1. COORDINATED INDUSTRY TRAINING AND COMMUNICATIONS*** + Reference / development group or committee to focus on agriculture and engage across stakeholders i.e. DPIPWE, education, industry, training.

**2. A POSITIVE INDUSTRY IMAGE*** + An oversupply of suitable labour attained by projecting an image that encourages participation
	+ A reliable workforce
	+ Perception of ag as a dynamic, engaging, sexy industry i.e. like the defence industry
		- For the ag sector to be seen as dynamic and sexy!
		- Industry promotion positive; something to entice people to work
		- Image of agriculture: agriculture / food and fibre production is highly valued by society
	+ Highlight / advertise the vast benefits of a career in agriculture
		- opportunities to buy into a business e.g. share farming;
		- wide range of tasks;
		- great lifestyle

**3. EFFECTIVE TARGETED TRAINING DELIVERED*** + Flexible learning options - outside of business hours
		- Upskilling in technology
		- Local crops taught at Uni
	+ Practical recognition of skills for staff that have practical ability
	+ Downtime aligned industry specific training delivered by experts in the sector
	+ Mid-career training opportunities for people who have been in the same job/field for a long time
		- People who are in jobs with no access/way to develop broader skills and increase knowledge
		- Make mid-career training an appealing and desirable option

**4. CLEAR CAREER PATHWAYS*** + Higher number of apprenticeships; Build awareness and attractiveness
	+ Genuine investment into genuine education at level of the whole organism
	+ Clear, defined employment pathways
		- Retaining skills and people, both in the area and industry
		- Defined career pathways - what can I do and how can I get there
		- Career path options; focussed and clear progress; not necessarily academic
		- Feed into the field by fostering engagement and knowledge early
		- Targeted training at the right time
		- Starting onsite training safety / task / why do we do it this way
		- Image of agriculture: the broad range of careers and employment opportunities are known by students, parents and educators
	+ Careers counsellors - would be great if they have had more awareness and knowledge of the various ag industries
	+ Genuine investment in education, including in the teachers who are teaching the kids

**5. SKILLED EMPLOYERS AND SUPERVISORS / LOOKING AFTER PEOPLE*** + Publicly funded short courses ‘soft skills’ 🡪 soft skills in schools
	+ More Mangers - people skills - decision makers
	+ Bridge communication gap between generations
 |
| **Gaps between the current and proposed situation (outcomes achieved scenario)** | The focus on gaps that industry and training providers can work on together. **1. COORDINATED INDUSTRY TRAINING AND COMMUNICATIONS*** Training across the industry is uncoordinated
* Lack of communication across the industry and with training providers
* Employers/employees often don’t know where to go do/find training or information about opportunities
* Too many options without understanding which one would be best for the business or students

**2. A POSITIVE INDUSTRY IMAGE*** General low awareness of the industry from the general community
* Lack of understanding of the importance of agriculture to the local economy
* Social licence or lack of it
* Not controlling the image of agriculture
* Need to promote a positive internal culture
* Need interconnectedness with other industries
* Lack of understanding from the general public of what agriculture actually is

**3. EFFECTIVE TARGETED TRAINING DELIVERED*** Local crops to be taught at Uni – place-based education
* Soft skills for managers – decision making and people skills
* Not enough courses delivered on the north west coast
* Group training organisation for ag apprentices
* Industry not communicating what’s needed to RTOs, or finding out what’s available

**4. CLEAR CAREER PATHWAYS*** Early learning education – not getting kids interested in agriculture young enough
* Not demonstrating the variety of career pathways within the sector to young people
* Not defining the roles available within the sector
* Don’t promote the career opportunities enough

**5. SKILLED EMPLOYERS AND SUPERVISORS / LOOKING AFTER PEOPLE*** There isn’t always recognition of the skills needed to be able to effectively complete a role
* Often not retaining employees’ mid-career – lose employees to career changes
* Not understanding how a work environment can affect staff morale, especially for young people
 |
| **What are we going to do?****Proposed actions to achieve outcomes and remove gaps** | The following questions were posed. However, participants focussed on higher level actions in the workshop. Several participants who represented larger scale businesses approached Skills Tasmania and or training providers to develop actions after the workshop. * + What are we really committed to?
	+ What **training** are you committed to supporting staff to do and RTO’s or UTas to deliver?
	+ What are the first steps we need to take?
	+ What kind of changes will we need to make?
	+ Who will do what?
	+ Who will have to talk to whom to make things happen?
 |
| **Proposed actions to achieve outcomes and remove gaps** | Unfortunately, some people left early and did not participate in this session. However, some large scale employers talked to Skills Tasmania and commented to facilitators re following up on opportunities. Some of the below actions could be added to the Plan (i.e. if not listed there already under tactics).1. **COORDINATED INDUSTRY TRAINING AND COMMUNICATIONS**
	* Ag working group (industry and training sector reps)
	* Career advisors in schools (others who advise young people) ensure they understand the opportunities ag has to offer and that is for smart kids
	* Staff training program development (with large scale employers) – assist them to put it together?
	* Expose school and TAFE teachers to industry so they understand it better
	* Interface ‘connecting services’ (Training brokerage? Creating networks?)
2. **A POSITIVE INDUSTRY IMAGE**
	* National advertising/information campaign about agriculture (e.g. careers/importance/job security)
	* Market ‘Australian grown’ (product and people)
3. **EFFECTIVE TARGETED TRAINING DELIVERED**
	* Career advisors in schools (others who advise young people) ensure they understand the opportunities ag has to offer and that is for smart kids
	* More qualified trainers & assessors (make it easier to become one)
	* Deliver training in: data analytics, drones, robotics, sensors, maintenance (technology on farm and for the future)
	* Multicampus ag college to integrate training delivery (similar to Marcus Oldham college)
	* Collaboration between sectors within industries to enable year round work (e.g. ag and forestry) to encourage more people into a career in ag.NB need to remove the hold on Centrelink payments for people in seasonal jobs
4. **CLEAR CAREER PATHWAYS**
	* Embed ag into school curriculum (compulsory)
	* Career advisors in schools (others who advise young people) ensure they understand the opportunities ag has to offer and that is for smart kids
5. **SKILLED EMPLOYERS AND SUPERVISORS / LOOKING AFTER PEOPLE**
	* Push Ag card (induction to ag <https://www.primaryemployers.com.au/agcard>)
	* Talking up opportunities in Tas Leaders Program and other management training (scholarships incl via peak industry bodies and RDCs)
	* KEEN Partners model for Devonport (NW region)
	* Short course for employers about employee management, particularly young people
	* Look at seasonal workforce sharing (forestry/berries)
 |
| **Recommendations from the workshop facilitators**  | Information for employers outlining training and upskilling opportunities and whom to talk to – send to all participants and interviewees from the Project as well as peak bodiesA project based on the KEEN modelEngaging information for school leavers/parents Finding out from school principals why they do not want to provide ag education in spite of government funding and what is needed to make them change |

Additional Notes

Outcomes session

Workshop notes were collected from three of the groups (tables). Other groups did not have any notes that were additional to the outcomes listed above. Some of the notes listed below relate to outcomes and some relate to potential actions.

Table/group A:

* + Prepare young people better for work placement
	+ Improve education of ag industries to what training is available
	+ Seasonal sharing of employees e.g. berries - forestry
	+ Firm links between training and workplace exposure
	+ Increase the number of qualified trainers and assessors in particular areas of expertise e.g. irrigation
	+ Image and promotion - promote ag as a valued career. maximise the NW Ag Apprentice of the Year while the opportunity exists

Table/Group B:

* + Investigate training for employers about attracting and retaining young people in agriculture
	+ Address (and resolve) the issue of “poaching” staff across firms - collective sector wide focus
	+ Improve ag image and reputation through good news stories, social media.
	+ Investigate options to “share” full time staff with other industries

Table/group C:

* + Courses more on low time specific
	+ Sector specific training
	+ Industry agreed training
	+ Downtime training aligned
	+ Single point of information for apprenticeship lifecycle
	+ Coordinated effective career awareness
	+ To have an image that encourages participation
	+ Accurately described lead roles for promotion
	+ Increased participation from local community
	+ Over supply of labour
	+ Demonstrated suitability through consistent industry training standards; and provide opportunities for people to have their existing skills recognised

Appendix 1: Plan presented in the North West Agricultural Workforce Plan Consultancy Project

Table 9‑3: **For Government to address**

| Pillar 1: Policy Matters |
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| **Strategies** | **Tactics** |
| **Training support framework development** | * + Create the ‘Clever Careers in Agriculture’ concept and give it meaning
	+ Continued government incentives and support for priority training to fill gaps in skills sets and competencies taught in the region:
		- Support initiatives for targeted ‘train the trainer’ programs, to upskill teachers and trainers in principles of adult learning, teaching and training for young adults, as well as innovative delivery of VET skill set/competency training required to fill gaps, including from new or reviewed training packages
		- Apprentice, traineeship, internship, vocational placement and graduate program position incentives
		- Sponsorship of targeted school programs above and beyond school gardens, continued support for agriculturally focussed school programs
	+ Support initiatives for training of employers, managers and supervisors to improve staff supervision and retention
	+ Making it easy to employ apprentices while making sure that workplaces and employers are adequate; consider training for employers (short course) or another type of support for employers who employ apprentices and trainees
 |
| **Agriculture Centre of Excellence** | * + Develop, over time, the Agriculture Centre of Excellence to become a nationally acknowledged training provider in agriculture by strengthening quality delivery of key training services that have been identified as lacking not only regionally but also state-wide and nationally. The main delivery mechanism should be digital and include face to face training at the Centre or/and, if possible, in major production regions (i.e., well trained and respected trainers travel to regional centres).
 |
| **Cooperation between key industry groups**  | * + Formation of an advisory group with strong leadership and shared goals e.g. including TAGP, TFGA, FGT, WT, TWiA, Young Agricultural Professionals Network (YAPN) and representatives from the education and training sector
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Table 9‑4: **For all sectors of industry, industry bodies, education and training providers and all levels of government to address**

| Pillar 2: Agri-Food Industry Image and Promotion |
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| **Strategies** | **Tactics** |
| **Change industry perceptions and prejudice**  | * + Promotion of good news stories on opportunities (‘Clever Careers’), industry future and the importance of the industry e.g. *solution to environmental challenges, people’s health and well-being, food security, opportunities to develop many skills and have a career, cross sector opportunities*
	+ Common goals and collaboration between agricultural industry sectors, career initiatives and education and training providers from schools to universities (e.g. via Tasmanian Agricultural Education Network and industry associations)
	+ Celebrating industry successes and innovation, especially achievements of young people, e.g. apprenticeship/traineeship awards, innovation awards
	+ Reducing the amount of negative reporting about agriculture and the use of misleading images and phrases by informing media about the importance of the industry as a provider of food, fibre, and jobs, and avoiding public fighting
	+ Engage industry organisations in changing perceptions and prejudice, e.g. TFGA, TAPG, Rural Youth, Young Professionals in Agriculture Network, Tas Women in Agriculture; this includes reminding them of positive use of language and images
 |
| **Continued industry promotion to job seekers** | * + Skilled careers promotion platform/toolkits for schools, career advisers, and people who want to change industries/careers, inclusive of career case studies, career pathway documentation and industry specific information and resources
	+ Engage young and upcoming industry leaders to speak about their industry and their career using electronic media e.g. YouTube
		- In-school delivery of a careers promotion toolkit at priority schools ‘Clever Careers’
		- Invite schools to attend suitable industry events with students, industry may sponsor schools to do so
		- Continuing school class visits to agricultural businesses and showcasing young people in the business
		- Ensuring agricultural industry career pages, e.g. Rural Skills Australia, MyCareer, My Skills, Harvest Trail, have engaging and up to date information about the diversity of careers and opportunities in different agricultural and horticultural sectors - ‘Clever Careers’
	+ Exploring opportunities for industry to further engage with the Tasmanian Agricultural Educators Network (TAEN) to foster engagement between industry and the education sector
	+ Promotion of agriculture based resources for schools such as provided by the Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA)
	+ Targeted campaigning to attract people, e.g. those working in other industries, to the agricultural industry in the region to fill identified gaps
	+ Targeted campaigning to attract people working interstate, to the region to fill identified gaps
	+ Social media presence including Instagram and Twitter potentially via the Industry Training Hub Burnie, e.g. modelled on Carpentry Australia #ProudChippy.
 |
| **Support a culture of training in agriculture** | * + Develop case studies showing the cost : benefit of training and or employing well trained people to industry
	+ Promote and support ‘Clever Agriculture’, the use of technology by trained people to increase productivity
	+ Ensure that employers understand that if employees are well trained and treated well, they are likely to stay or return.
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Table 9‑5: For education and training providers and industry to address

| Pillar 3: Effective Training systems (formal and informal) |
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| **Strategies** | **Tactics** |
| **Relevant training design and delivery** | * + Strengthen partnerships between key training providers, especially TasTAFE, other RTOs and University of Tasmania, to enable collaboration in course delivery, course promotion, infrastructure and technology availability, on-site/regional content delivery, delivery of course content within and, if required, in addition to existing Training Packages, Skill Sets, Competencies and University/College Courses
	+ Improve ease of access to and completion rate of Cert IV Training and Assessment by non-RTO trainers and industry members, especially by making it easier to get credits for previous experience
	+ Inform training and education providers of industry skill gaps and priorities; ensure RTOs know which training packages, skills sets, and competencies to deliver to ensure targeted course content and design (e.g. short courses) meet industry needs for the future
	+ Support informal training delivery through offering ‘train the trainer’ upskilling, and also connecting non RTO trainers who have the required technical skills to RTOs (who can offer assessments) to fill gaps, e.g. via the Industry Training Hub Burnie
 |
| **Promotion of targeted training programs**  | * + Collaboration of training service providers, including tertiary, VET, and informal providers (not RTOs), for the promotion of training programs as well as apprenticeships, traineeships, and vocational placements linked to career pathways through a careers promotion platform, e.g. via the Industry Training Hub Burnie
	+ Promote formal training opportunities, including tertiary and VET with a focus on identified skills gaps amongst agricultural businesses; ensure businesses understand that RTO delivered training can be customised to their needs, as long as they have a commitment to attend and/or have employees attending
	+ Promote training services in a way that attracts the groups of people that the agri-food industry wants to employ
	+ Support, foster, and encourage apprenticeship, traineeship, internship, and vocational placement programs to kick off ‘Clever Careers’ in Agri-food
	+ Improve communications about training opportunities including extension funded via RDC levy system
 |
| **Leadership and staff development initiatives** | * + Upskilling for employers, managers and supervisors especially in staff management, intergenerational management and creating a positive culture
	+ Continue to support and promote participation in established leadership and development initiatives, e.g. Tasmanian Leaders Program, Growing Leaders programs by RDCs, Masterclass in Horticultural Business
	+ Facilitate regional and international study exchange and networking opportunities for peer-to-peer learning
	+ Promote and support scholarships, e.g. Nuffield, Churchill, Australian Rural Leadership Foundation
	+ Develop a mentor program with Australian Rural Leadership Foundation and the Tasmanian Leaders ALUMNI, Tas Women in Agriculture, and the Young Professionals in Agriculture Network
	+ Develop internship programs
	+ Train the trainer programs for RTO teachers and trainers
 |
| **Implementation of strategies at the Agriculture Centre of Excellence**  | * + Focus on filling identified priority training needs, being flexible and creative about effective delivery methods, use of trainers and industry experts as well as different locations as appropriate
	+ Training design and delivery to be tested against the key principles identified:
		- Relevance (focus on key topics, no need to ‘sit’ through training not needed)
		- Ease of access (location, time of day, and time of year)
		- Responsiveness and flexibility (adapt to changing needs)
		- Quality trainers (they need to ‘know their stuff’, be professional)
		- Affordability (cost : benefit balance)
	+ Offer leadership development, mentoring and coaching short courses for employers, managers and supervisors
	+ Consider preparatory/induction training for seasonal workers new to the industry or region covering common principles such as WH&S, food safety, chemical safety, biosecurity, behaviour and manners, personal safety, emergency response.
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Table 9‑6: For industry and education and training providers to address

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| Pillar 4: skills, qualifications and careEr pathways |
| **Strategies** | **Tactics** |
| **Dynamic career pathways** | * + Promote the dynamic and also non-linear career pathways for all levels of employment within agri-food industries; show that it is possible to move from operational to management positions
	+ Demonstrate entry and exit opportunities for Clever Careers with the agri-food industry across the supply chain i.e. show people that they can come to the industry from different backgrounds and also have opportunities in other industries, if trained in an agri-food sector
	+ Promote blended education and micro-credentials (e.g. via competency training and short courses in years 11 and 12, and for people in the workforce)
	+ Develop job and career case studies to attract people to work in agriculture:
* Focus on areas of interest (e.g. technology, communication, trades, growing plants, accounting, sales, people, etc) and identified gaps rather than jobs or industries
* Profile and document real world examples of skilled workers across the agricultural industry at different career levels and examples
* Promote and share case studies through industry promotion initiatives, including skilled careers promotion toolkit
 |
| **Recognition of skills from many forms training** | * + Ensure that employers, employees and those new to agri-food industries and have a way of easily demonstrating skills and qualifications, e.g. via a skills and training ‘passport’ listing completed formal and informal training and competencies; the passport may be maintained via Tas TAFE but allow inclusion of training delivered by other RTOs, UTAS courses, and other industry courses
 |
| **Cross industry coordination and training brokerage** | * + Training brokerage – provide and promote central coordination (similar to current Industry Training Hub Burnie for year 11&12 model) that industry can access to get information about training offers and lodge training needs and where providers of formal and informal training can lodge training services/offers
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Table 9‑7: **For industry and education and training providers to address**

| Pillar 5: Looking After People in Agriculture |
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| **Strategies** | **Tactics** |
| **Human resources toolkit** | * + Compile and document information sheets and templates for best practice human resource management to facilitate a consistent baseline of practice across the industry; the dairy industry has set a good example http://www.thepeopleindairy.org.au/eski-landing-page.htm. The toolkit should include information relating to:
* Rights, responsibilities, entitlements
* Recruitment, job description, induction and probation, retaining staff, record keeping
* Pay rates and award classifications, flexibility
* Performance management, dismissal, and redundancy
* Workplace health and safety
* Legal obligations
 |
| **Employer training and information**  | * + Encourage employers to improve people management and good human resource management practices via engaging them in training (e.g. showcase successful employers)
	+ Provide a toolkit for employers which includes information relating to:
* Recruitment – be an employer of choice
* Job descriptions, outlining of job roles
* Induction and probation
* Pay rates and award classifications
* People and performance management
* Dismissal and redundancy
* Workplace health and safety
* Cultural awareness.
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| **Programs for casual and seasonal workers**  | * + Induction training package including in languages other than English
 |