

16 March 2006

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
COMMITTEES**

**20 MAR 2006**

**RECEIVED**

Mr Stephen Frappell  
Acting Director  
State Development Committee  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

BY FAX: 02 9230 2981

Dear Mr Frappell

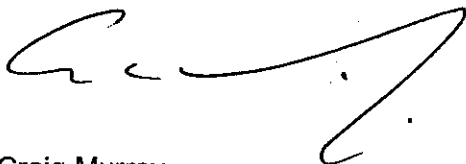
Thank you for your letter of 17 February 2006 enclosing a copy of Country Energy's evidence to the Committee's Inquiry into Skills Shortages in Rural and Regional NSW.

A minor change is requested to Page 23 of the transcript to clarify that the relevant line worker pay rate quoted is per fortnight rather than per week.

Answers to questions taken on notice at the hearing are attached for the consideration of the Committee.

I trust that this information is of assistance to the Committee. If you require further information or clarification on any point, please contact Bill Frewen, Group General Manager External Relations, on 02 9249 3105 or by email to [bill.frewen@countryenergy.com.au](mailto:bill.frewen@countryenergy.com.au).

Yours sincerely



Craig Murray  
Managing Director

## QUESTION ON NOTICE – Transcript Reference, Page 22

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** You said earlier that there were 1,600 applications.

**Mr MURRAY:** For the last intake alone.

**The Hon. GREG DONNELLY:** Did a large number of 15 and 16 year olds apply; would they form a reasonable proportion of the applicants?

**Ms BENSON:** I would assume so, but I cannot tell you without checking.

**Mr MURRAY:** We can check that and forward the information. Most of the programs and most apprenticeships these days are aimed at HSC students rather than the more traditional year 10 leavers.

## ANSWER

Between the period January 1999 – December 2005, Country Energy has employed a total of 340 apprentices and trainees.

Recruitment records associated with the employment of these apprentices and trainees indicate that their age demographic is as follows:

1. Age < 17 Years	Nil
2. Age 18 – 25 Years	172
3. Age 26 – 30 Years	81
4. Age > 31 Years	87

Analysis of the age demographic of apprentices and trainees currently employed by Country Energy indicate that, historically:

- ♦ The majority of apprentices currently employed are drawn from the 18-25 age demographic and form approximately 51% of the total apprentice/trainee population.
- ♦ Apprentices within an age demographic of greater than 26 years of age form approximately 49% of the total apprentice/trainee population.

As mentioned during the Committee's hearing in Queanbeyan, Country Energy is currently examining options to develop and implement a program to target high school students considering a career in the electricity industry. This may lead to a larger number of younger apprentices in future years.

Demographic breakdown of the 2006 apprenticeship applicants is not yet available.

**QUESTION ON NOTICE – Transcript Reference, Page 28**

**The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY:** How have you gone about upskilling within Country Energy for training of engineers, and through which organisation are they doing that course?

**Mr FREWEN:** Terri probably knows better than I. But a number of our regional general managers started as apprentices and have obtained various technical qualifications to get there.

**Mr MURRAY:** Also, we have just started a professional engineers cadetship program within the organisation.

**Ms BENSON:** And we did target internal people who did not have an engineering qualification but have technical qualifications. I think it is eight that have just gone into an intake, and they are being sponsored through New England and Newcastle universities, two of the three universities that we have got involved in the sandwich course for them.

**The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY:** In previous evidence taken in the Riverina concern was expressed that the only distance engineering course that they could do was through Queensland, at Toowoomba.

**Ms BENSON:** I would have to get back to you, because I know when we were putting it together it was really hard to find a university to link it to. I cannot remember which organisation we went with, but I can find out for you and give you that information.

**ANSWER**

Country Energy's engineering cadet program is being run in conjunction with the University of Technology in Sydney (UTS).

Country Energy also funds a scholarship at the University of Newcastle, which provides a place for an electrical engineering student. The scholarship recipient receives regular work experience opportunities with Country Energy during semester breaks.

**ENDS**