

**Submission  
No 5**

## **INQUIRY INTO ASPECTS OF AGRICULTURE IN NSW**

**Organisation:** NSW Department of Education

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**Date received:** 31/08/2007

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**DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF TAFE NSW**



Early Childhood and Primary Education  
Secondary Education  
Technical and Further Education  
Vocational Education and Training  
Higher Education  
Adult and Community Education

The Director  
Standing Committee on State Development  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

DGL 07/1015

Dear Sir/Madam

I write in response to a letter from the Hon Tony Catanzariti MLC of 4 July 2007, regarding the *Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development: Inquiry into Aspects of Agriculture in New South Wales*.

The New South Wales Department of Education and Training supports and promotes the teaching of agriculture in schools through curriculum resources, professional development and the provision of facilities that enable course requirements to be met. The Department also assists in the development, refinement and promotion of education and training pathways into a range of agriculture-related careers.

Accordingly, I am pleased to enclose the Department's submission to the Inquiry.

I look forward to the release of the Standing Committee's Report later this year.

Yours sincerely

Michael Coutts-Trotter  
**DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF TAFE NSW**

29 August 2007

TAB A

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

The Years 11-12 Agriculture and the Years 7-10 Agricultural Technology syllabuses require students to study and to participate in a variety of practical applications involving both plant and animal enterprises. The NSW Department of Education and Training supports and promotes the teaching of agriculture in schools through curriculum resources, professional development and the provision of facilities that enable course requirements to be met.

***The Schools Animal Care and Ethics Committee***

The Department also ensures other legislative requirements are met in the teaching of agriculture including compliance with the requirements of the *Animal Research Act 1985* (NSW). This legislation is administered by the Department of Primary Industries through the Animal Research Review Panel.

The *Animal Research Act* incorporates a system of enforced self-regulation, with animal ethics committees required to monitor the use of animals in teaching. The Schools Animal Care and Ethics Committee was established in 1990 for this purpose. The Schools Animal Care and Ethics Committee is responsible to the NSW Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Commission of NSW and the Association of Independent Schools of NSW. Its composition and operations are described in the legislation.

The work of the Schools Animal Care and Ethics Committee is managed by the NSW Department of Education and Training and funded by the three school sectors. The Schools Animal Care and Ethics Committee meets six times a year, routinely inspects a minimum of 16 schools throughout the state, responds to complaints related to the use of animals in schools and supports teachers through a variety of initiatives.

The Schools Animal Welfare Officer coordinates the work of the Schools Animal Care and Ethics Committee, supports the school sectors to be proactive in compliance with the legislation, promotes best practice animal welfare practices in schools and provides support to teachers, especially agriculture teachers. Examples of animal welfare support include:

- The document, *Animals in schools: Animal welfare guidelines for teachers*, both in hard copy and electronically
- The *Animals in schools* website
- The CD ROM based training package, *Animals in education*
- *Animal welfare in agriculture* teaching materials
- Statewide professional development workshops in 2006 and 2007 titled, *Animal care and ICT in agriculture*
- Presentations and participation at NSW Association of Agriculture Teachers conferences and meetings.

The work of the Schools Animal Welfare Officer involves liaising with teachers and with many agencies that relate to the use of animals, these include the Office of the

Board of Studies, Department of Primary Industries, Department of Local Government, Australian Veterinary Association, RSPCA, Animal Welfare League, TAFE NSW and tertiary education institutions.

### ***The Primary Industries Curriculum Framework and the NSW Higher School Certificate***

There is a relevant part of the Vocational Education and Training curriculum available to Higher School Certificate students in schools, TAFE colleges and other Registered Training Organisations across NSW, and that is the Primary Industries Curriculum Framework.

Primary Industries, Higher School Certificate Vocational Education and Training course enrolments in Years 11 and 12 were as follows:

2002	1,811
2003	2,129
2004	2,214
2005	2,224

Industry curriculum framework courses give students the opportunity to gain credit towards the NSW Higher School Certificate and credit towards national vocational qualifications under the Australian Qualifications Framework.

Industry curriculum frameworks are based on nationally endorsed Training Packages. They specify the range of industry-developed units of competency from the relevant Training Packages which are suitable for the HSC. They also define how units of competency are arranged in HSC Vocational Education and Training courses to gain unit credit for the HSC. Wherever possible, Vocational Education and Training courses in industry curriculum frameworks are aligned to national Training Package qualifications.

### ***Pathways and careers***

The Department of Education and Training assists in the development, refinement and promotion of education and training pathways into a range of agriculture-related careers.

The Department has implemented policies and practices that are specifically designed to support rural communities in each of these areas. In relation to the maintenance of education and training services, it is committed to the provision of:

- strong primary schools with well-supported leadership and staff, and encouragement for schools to form effective partnerships with their communities and with other schools to maximise their effectiveness. For example, initiatives pursued within the NSW Country Areas Program have included support and training for school leaders, and projects that encourage schools to aggregate their resources in collaboration with neighbouring schools, or to form partnerships with schools in regional or urban centres.
- comprehensive secondary schooling through networks of high and central schools using sophisticated information technologies to bring broad curriculum

choice and connectedness to students in isolated areas. The Department provides links through its Wide Area Network to support videoconferencing and various web collaboration tools.

- students in Years 11 and 12 at a number of government schools across the state are offered the opportunity to study a Certificate II in Agriculture, either directly at the school or in conjunction with the local TAFE NSW Institute. Of the many schools which offer these vocational pathways, residential accommodation is available at Farrer, Hurlstone and Yanco Agricultural High Schools. The latter two provide residential accommodation for both male and female students.
- expanded and flexible training opportunities through working partnerships between local schools and vocational education providers, especially NSW TAFE. For example, New England TAFE Institute has developed 'tailor-made' courses that are delivered to students in the northern borders area of NSW through a sharing arrangement with the schools at Collarenebri, Mungindi, Goodooga and Boggabilla, and the North Coast TAFE Institute cooperates with schools in the Clarence Valley to provide a needs-driven careers program that makes innovative use of summer schools and intensive holiday practicums.
- provision of lifelong learning opportunities through the full-time or part-time enrolment of adult learners in education and training programs. A number of rural central schools (such as Ivanhoe Central) have successfully graduated adult learners through HSC and Vocational Education programs.

**TAFE NSW SUBMISSION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING  
COMMITTEE ON STATE DEVELOPMENT: INQUIRY INTO ASPECTS OF  
AGRICULTURE IN NSW**

The significance of the agriculture industry and the factors that impact on it form the context for a focus by TAFE NSW on the sector.

In 2003-04, the agriculture sector directly generated 4 per cent of national Gross Domestic Product, employed 375 000 people or 4 per cent of the workforce and accounted for around 22 per cent of total exports in 2003-04 (*Trends in Australian Agriculture, Productivity Commission 2005 Research Paper*).

The agricultural industries have shown resilience to a wide range of influences including droughts, floods, bushfires, legislative and regulatory changes, market access, international competition, climate change and rapid changes in technology.

However access to a sufficient supply of skilled workers in regional NSW is needed to protect this sector and the health of the NSW economy.

There are significant shortages of skilled and unskilled people in the sector and problems in attracting and retaining young people and in providing training opportunities (*Skills: Rural Australia's Need: Inquiry into rural skills training and research, Commonwealth House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, February 2007*).

The following factors impact on the availability of skilled workers in the industry:

- Competition for labour and skilled workers from a strong minerals industry
- The long term drift of people from rural communities to urban and coastal centres as a result of the drought and as a response to geographical isolation
- Negative community perceptions of agriculture as an industry and agriculture as a career;
- Lack of formal training and recognition of work based skills within the agricultural workforce;
- Lack of inclusion by the Commonwealth Government of agriculture in its national skills shortage list (the Skills in Demand Lists for States and Territories 2006)

**Initiatives to address impediments to sustaining appropriate levels of productive capacity and growth in the agricultural industry, having regard to the NSW State Plan priority areas of 'Growing Prosperity Across NSW' and 'Environment for Living'.**

TAFE NSW is the largest provider of vocational education and training in Australia. It is a network of ten institutes comprising 136 campuses, colleges and specialist centres across NSW. In 2006, it held 86.8 per cent of the publicly funded vocational education and training market in NSW (as measured by National Reporting hours), 92.4 per cent of all apprenticeship approvals and 14.6 per cent of all traineeship approvals in NSW in 2006.

It is well placed to provide a broad range of training to rural and regional areas in New South Wales, thereby addressing Priority P7 of the NSW State Plan of providing better access to training in rural and regional NSW to support local economies.

Rural and regional New South Wales is notable for lower population numbers, relative to metropolitan areas, and lower overall enrolment numbers in vocational education and training. TAFE NSW, as a large public provider, has the capacity and networks to provide training where other smaller Registered Training Organisations may not.

The delivery of training in locations and ways that suit the rural and regional settings is critical to addressing skills shortages and the related factors of attracting and retaining young people.

TAFE NSW delivers agricultural training on the job, on site, off job, flexibly, mixed mode and face to face in TAFE NSW colleges to meet enterprise needs. In 2006 there were 24 399 enrolments in agriculture and related courses leading to Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma qualifications. Short courses are also available to meet the needs of individual industries and enterprises.

TAFE NSW assists in the shaping of national training qualifications by advising on the content of new and revised national agriculture and related training packages. In doing this TAFE NSW seeks to ensure the qualifications meet industry needs, including those of small and medium enterprises who engage less well than larger enterprises with the national training system. It also assists in ensuring better environmental outcomes thereby addressing NSW State Plan Priority E4 (Better environmental outcomes for native vegetation biodiversity, land, rivers and coastal waterways).

TAFE NSW develops and maintains close relationships with industries and enterprises to provide targeted contextualised training to meet the specific needs of these industries and to encourage a greater reach and acceptance of the need for training. These activities assist in meeting NSW State Plan Priority P4 (More people participating in education and training throughout their life).

**TAFE NSW:**

- Works with the *Australian Lot Feeders Association* and *Meat and Livestock Australia Limited* to deliver training programs for employees in the beef cattle feed lot industry in the workplace.
- Works with the *Shearing Contractors' Association* and *Australian Wool Innovation Limited* to deliver training and coaching programs for shearers and wool handlers.
- Is collaborating with the *National Agricultural Commodities Marketing Association* to develop an accredited grain trading course
- Developed specific accredited courses for the livestock, broad acre cropping and production horticulture industries to meet their need for chemical training
- Works with the *NSW Department of Primary Industries* to explore ways in which the two organisations can improve training opportunities for the honey bee industry, following the release of national honey bee qualifications
- Works with the *Poultry Cooperative Research Centre* to develop relevant training programs for the industry through input into national Training Package reviews, developing training resources, promoting training with the industry and delivering training for example in animal welfare for chicken meat producers
- Developed accredited courses to provide training to the performance horse industry that address environmental issues and help to make students aware of their responsibilities. They also have a strong focus on animal welfare and occupational health and safety issues
- Delivers school based traineeships and apprenticeships for the wood and paper products industry areas
- Delivers training package and skills sets for environmental management and collaborates with environment groups such as the *National Parks Association of NSW*, *LandCare* and the *Catchment Management Authorities* to ensure a greater reach and acceptance of the need for training.

Details of TAFE NSW courses and training programs are at **Attachment 1**.

**Current Initiatives**

- TAFE NSW is developing and implementing community based employment and training programs to facilitate the continuous employment and lifelong skilling of the labour force in rural NSW.
- The Department of Education and Training is managing a *Strategic Skilling Program* underpinned by industry-informed statewide policies and processes to target contestable funding for identified key skills shortage areas and skills gaps in agriculture and related industries to meet the short, medium and long term needs of these industries.
- TAFE NSW is working with the *NSW Farmers Association* and other peak bodies to promote careers in agriculture and agriculture related industries.



**Attachment 1****Current TAFE NSW courses and training programs**

TAFE NSW delivers Primary Industries and Natural Resources courses in four program areas - Extensive Agriculture, Intensive Agriculture, Conservation and Land Management (including Forestry) and Horticulture.

Certificate and Diploma courses are supplemented by short courses designed to meet the needs of individual industries and enterprises.

**1 Livestock, broad acre cropping and production horticulture industries**

TAFE NSW delivers Certificates II, III, IV and Diploma level training to the livestock, broad acre cropping and production horticulture industries as well as skills sets leading to Statements of Attainment. Training is offered flexibly so that students can study at times and locations convenient to them. Specific accredited courses have also been developed to meet the industry's need for chemical training.

TAFE NSW is also providing input into the revision of the Rural Production Training Package (RTE03).

TAFE NSW has developed close relationships with a number of industries to develop targeted contextualised training to meet the specific needs of these industries.

Examples of these are:

**Apiary Industry - Honey Bees**

National honey bee qualifications (Certificates II, III IV and Diploma) became available in late 2006.

**Poultry Industry – Eggs and Chicken Meat**

TAFE NSW is working closely with the Poultry CRC to develop relevant training programs for the industry. Currently animal welfare training is being conducted for chicken meat producers by TAFE NSW.

**Horse Industry**

TAFE NSW has developed accredited courses to provide training to the performance horse industry. Currently there are no national qualifications available for this sector of the horse industry.

**Aquaculture Industry**

TAFE NSW delivers Certificates II, III, IV and Diploma training to the aquaculture industry. Training is offered flexibly so that students can study at times and locations convenient to them. TAFE NSW is also providing input into the revision of the Seafood Industry Training Package (SFI04).

## **2 Wood and Paper Products Industry**

TAFE NSW delivers training in all six sectors covered by the Forest and Forest Products Training Package (FPI05) and the two sectors contained in the Pulp and Paper Training Package (FPP01). The training is offered flexibly so that employees can engage in their preferred studies at times and locations that are convenient to them.

## **3 Natural Resource Management**

TAFE NSW is actively involved in the review of the Conservation and Land Management Training Package (RTD02). Collaborative work with environment groups such as National Parks Association, LandCare and the Catchment Management Authorities will provide greater reach and acceptance of the need for training.