

**Submission
No 252**

**INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Organisation: Hay Inc.
Date received: 31/08/2015

HAY INC. Rural Education Program Committee

Submission from Hay Inc. Committee to the Inquiry into Vocational Education and Training in NSW.

Hay Inc. is a community driven organisation established to provide agricultural skills, a rural education and an on farm experience to young people. These are generally school leavers wanting to work on a farm and are not yet decided about undertaking some form of vocational training.

The Hay Inc. Committee consists of Hay and district farmers, rural contractors and other committed stakeholders including Tocal College and Australian Wool Innovation (AWI). The Committee welcomes the opportunity to provide a short submission to the Inquiry outlining the practical difficulties in delivering industry driven, on farm training to young people looking to agriculture as a possible career choice. The following information covers the five Terms of Reference points.

1. Factors Influencing Trainee Choices:

Established in 2014, Hay Inc. launched the Hay Rural Education Program in response to concerns about the decline in the traditional Jackeroo/Jillaroo system and the associated lack of livestock and other essential rural skills being handed down to the next generation.

Trainees are attracted to the Hay Inc. program as they wish to start working on a farm and also undertake blocks of practical training delivered in a practical setting by trainers with many years' experience from working on extensive rural properties. The blocks of training cover a range of topics based around the production calendar for sheep, wool production and cattle.

Course fees are kept low to attract trainees who, otherwise indicate that they cannot afford to undertake College or TAFE courses.

2. Role played by public Vocational Education Training (VET) providers:

In its first year of operation, Hay Inc. worked with Tocal College and others, to provide accredited blocks of training. These included Work, health and safety, First Aid and Level 2 Chemical Application. As well, training was provided in Sheep handling, Motor bike and small engine maintenance, fence construction, sheep assessment and nutrition, wool harvesting and wool shed management to name some of the units. This training was provided by experienced local trainers, often on a voluntary or minimal cost basis.

3. Cost of delivering affordable and accessible VET:

As outlined in Item 2. Above, the ability of trainees to undertake the Hay Inc. Program is predicated on keeping the course fees, accommodation and travel charges to a minimum. This has been achieved so far by the valuable provision of many voluntary services or on a "at cost" basis to Hay Inc. The alternative to Hay Inc. Program for many prospective trainees is not to undertake any

agriculture VET or to drop out of agriculture altogether, if they are unable to obtain or keep a job on a farm.

4. Level of Industry Participation:

Hay Inc. enjoys a high level of support from local farms and associated businesses including some financial provision and job opportunities for trainees. However, without the financial and technical support of Tocal College and AWI, the successful delivery of the first year's program would not have been possible. Agriculture training is generally recognised as being the most expensive form of industry training provided and this is especially the case with on farm training delivery.

AWI have committed to a further two years support for Hay Inc. which will assist in keeping costs down but this is balanced by Tocal College not able to provide any further financial assistance.

5. Smart and Skilled reforms:

Realistic access to Smart and Skilled course funding for trainees is the only option available for Hay Inc. to continue provision of accredited training. Without the funding, the course fee per trainee is estimated to be around \$9000, which is a prohibitive cost.

However, the current conditions for eligibility to access Smart and Skilled funding are a big barrier. These include evidence of status as unemployed and to be in receipt of Centrelink payments by the 30th November each year. This precludes many of our prospective trainees who are undertaking HSC and still awaiting their final results.

Without access to Smart and Skilled funding, Hay Inc. will have little option but to revert to non-accredited training with no recognised course qualification upon completion of the program.

A second issue is the increasing cost of being assessed for Recognised Prior Learning (RPL). This means trainees will find it expensive to attempt to obtain recognition of their Hay Inc. training if wishing to proceed to further studies in agriculture.

The third issue is the lack of transparency for "loadings" e.g. for aboriginal students, remote students, unemployed students etc. This prevents a costs assessment of the funding available in each case. Without a calculation of costs in advance, it is impossible to set budgets to determine whether Hay Inc' resources will cover the balance of costs in running the training. An application must be submitted to Smart and Skilled before the level of funding for that student is determined or known. Pro forma guidelines for Loadings would be advantageous.

Thank you for your consideration.

Chris Bowman

Chris Bowman,

Chair, Hay Inc. Committee

31 August 2015