



11 May 2006

**Legislative Council
Standing Committee on State Development**

**FINAL REPORT:
INQUIRY INTO SKILLS SHORTAGES
IN RURAL AND REGIONAL NSW**

The Chair of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development, the Hon Tony Catanzariti MLC, today tabled the Committee's report on the Inquiry into skills shortages in rural and regional NSW.

Commenting on the report, Mr Catanzariti observed: 'This is an important report. The economic and social impacts of the skills shortage in rural and regional NSW are profound – many local towns face the challenges of loss of income, loss of essential services and loss of young people to metropolitan areas.

Moves are already being undertaken by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments to address some of these issues. The NSW Government recently release the Plan for Securing our Skilled Workforce, and a new Council of Australian Government's regional program, to commence in July 2006, is expected to help address the supply of skilled labour to industry and the regions.

However, it is beholden on all levels of Government – local councils, the NSW Government and the Commonwealth Government – to work collaboratively to enhance and promote the many positive aspects of life in rural and regional NSW. In particular, the Committee makes recommendations for greater coordination and collaboration between the State Regional Development Boards and the Commonwealth Area Consultative Councils.

At the same time, the vocational education and training system is the key to addressing the long terms skills shortages in the labour market. The Committee in particular recognises the importance of the TAFE NSW in responding to the training needs of industry, and makes a number of recommendations to increase the flexibility of the TAFE system.

The Committee also believes that skilled migration should be encouraged to address niche skills shortages in the labour market. However, the Committee recognises that skills shortages are an international phenomenon, and that the capacity of skilled migration to address the skills shortage in Australia is limited.

I would like to recognise the contribution of all those who participated in this inquiry – especially those parties that made submissions and gave their valuable time to appear at the Committee's hearings. The Committee is very pleased to have had the opportunity to have visited many regional centres during the inquiry and to have spoken to a diverse range of witnesses in relation to the skills shortage in rural and regional NSW.

The report, which includes 20 recommendations, is available on the Committee's web page at www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/statedevelopment. The Committee awaits the Government's response with interest.'

For further information please contact the Committee Secretariat on 9230 2641 or for comment, please contact Tony Catanzariti MLC, Chair of the Committee on (02) 9230 2837