



29 July 2020

Mr John Azarias
Chair
National Agricultural Labour Advisory Committee

Submitted online: haveyoursay.agriculture.gov.au/national-agricultural-workforce-strategy

Dear Mr Azarias,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the review of the *National Agricultural Workforce Strategy*.

This submission represents all the major commercial forest growers, managers, processors, public service providers and private service providers in Tasmania via their respective membership of the *Tasmanian Forest and Forest Products Network* (TFFPN). A TFFPN working group has been established specifically for this review and each member has provided input and approval of this paper.

About the TFFPN

The TFFPN provides an inclusive, open and transparent platform on industry matters for all those people who either work within or who support a productive, sustainable and profitable forest industry in Tasmania. To achieve this the role of the TFFPN includes:

- Being a communication hub;
- Providing informed policy advice to government and the industry;
- Providing a focal point for Government to communicate high level issues of common concern across the Network;
- Fostering Research and Development in the industry;
- Promoting skills development and career paths across the industry;
- Providing a linkage point across the industry to coordinate policy, government responses and other matters of common interest;
- Community engagement and education, providing information about the issues in the industry and building support for those who work in it;
- Promoting the Brand; and
- Building partnerships and aligned interests.

More information on the TFFPN can be found here <https://www.tffpn.com.au/>

Specific TFFPN Members Represented in this Submission

- Northern Tasmania Forestry Hub
- Arbre Hub
- Timber Training Creswick
- Private Forests Tasmania
- Forest Education Foundation
- Forico Pty Limited
- Sustainable Timber Tasmania
- Timberlink Australia Pty Limited
- AKS Forest Solutions
- Timberlands Pacific Pty Ltd
- Reliance Forest Fibre
- Norske Skog
- Department of State Growth - Observer
- Skills Tasmania - Observer
- Forest Practices Authority - Observer

Collectively, these stakeholders (Network Members) have a significant stake in the future of Tasmania's forest sector and individually are significantly invested in the future workforce.

In terms of scale, these Network Members represent more than 1.1 million hectares of commercial land management and an annual production of more than 4.3 million tonnes of wood fibre for export and domestic processing.

Network Members have diverse operations and directly generate over 3,000 jobs, with an additional 2,500 jobs from flow on impacts into other related industries. When last reviewed in 2016, the Tasmanian forest industry generated more full-time jobs than other parts of the Tasmanian economy, with 82% of those employed in the industry working full time, compared to 60% in the broader economy.

Based on the scope and scale outlined above the TFFPN is well qualified to present this submission.

Opening Remarks

Network Members appreciate the specific inclusion of the forest sector within the National Agricultural Workforce Strategy. The forest sector has many intrinsic similarities to conventional agriculture, particularly in the context of primary production (forest growing), and manufacturing. Accordingly, many of the challenges are also similar, noting (i) safety performance, (ii) demographics, (iii) perception barriers for entry, and (iv) mid-career professional development.

Pleasingly, this review prompts a local ‘Tasmanian’ reassessment amongst Network Members, and whilst there are many challenges, there are also many success stories from established grass roots initiatives. Flowing from this submission is a further local initiative to develop a *Tasmanian Forest Industry Workforce Development Plan*.

This submission is provided by Network Members within the context of themes and questions of the Discussion Paper – February 2020. All questions from the Discussion Paper are included for completeness, with those questions not applicable marked with strikethrough text (~~example~~).

Responses to the Discussion Paper

Chapter 2

- 1) During the next 10 years, what impact will the following changes to agricultural production, processing and distribution have on the workforce:

- a) innovation and technological advancement, including robotics and Artificial Intelligence

The forest sector is building an enormous inventory of ‘big data’ that is currently underutilised and represents an opportunity (possibly mandate) for growth and efficiency gains. Alongside this, customers are growing in sophistication and are demanding tighter product specifications.

The forest sector needs to be attractive to young talent entering the workforce with technology skillsets that can deliver on big data. In addition, the existing workforce requires support to upskill and maintain currency in the changing workplace.

Existing Solutions - Examples:

ARBRE - <https://www.arbre.net.au/>

A not for profit organisation built by the industry leaders in Tasmania to promote the forest industry and related jobs.

The purpose of the Hub is to facilitate the promotion of the forest industry training and careers with particular focus on harvesting, transport and silviculture; the provision of information on those careers; to provide a training facility with in-field capability; to act as a referral agency to industry

endorsed training providers and to act as a conduit for people seeking a career in the forest industry to prospective employers.

National Institute for Forest Products Innovation – NIFPI - <https://nifpi.org.au/>

The National Institute for Forest Products Innovation is committed to promoting and encouraging innovation in Australia’s forest and wood products industry. The Australian, South Australian and Tasmanian Governments combined initial commitment of \$8 million has enabled the two National Institute for Forest Products Innovation Centres to be established. The Centres are based at Mount Gambier and Launceston and exist to provide a major boost to the forest industries in those regions and the thousands of regional jobs they support.

Each centre provides a vital role in supporting cutting-edge research, fostering collaboration, boosting innovation, increasing profitability, maintaining jobs and growing the market. Some examples of this work include;

- *NT011 Unlocking financial innovation in forest products with natural capital; The objective of the project is to unlock investment in the non-timber natural capital value of Australian forest resources, by developing methods and tools for forest owners and investors to cost-effectively assess, monitor and manage natural capital risks and opportunities; and*
 - *NT015 Developing a New Generation of Tasmanian Appearance Hardwood Products for In-State Design and Manufacturing; This project will develop a new generation of hardwood appearance products for manufacture in-state using current and new technologies from the available native, reclaimed, and plantation resources.*
- b) changes to agricultural production—for example, moves to high-value crops and produce, or structural adjustment

Agricultural production is changing rapidly in Tasmania with significant growth attached to the “clean and green” image associated with food production and consumption. This has been accelerated by the growth in the tourism sector but also this has been in response to international demand for products which are not genetically modified and are free of pests and diseases. The quality of agricultural produce is improving to meet high-end demand in Asia which commands premium prices. Also, there is growth in the range and diversity of products and much of this is further processed into high value commodities such as saffron gin and craft cider.

Some innovations in this sector include new agroforestry enterprises such as intercropping of with high value crops such as pyrethrum with plantation timber. This provides high value returns during early tree establishment and is an effective weed and pest control. Another innovation is the use of shelterbelts to protect seed production crops. These shelterbelts provide the opportunity to plant similar crops closer together while at the same time improving pollination and productive returns. These productivity returns can result in much higher than standard 10 to 20% productivity returns expected from livestock enterprises associated with shelterbelts.

In short, the innovations in agroforestry experienced in Tasmania come about partly as a result of the employment of innovators with higher levels of education which may or may not be directly associated with agriculture or agronomy and related science based sectors. Very often these new skills come from people with business, agribusiness, marketing, finance, engineering and other disciplinary training. As a result, it is believed that growth and improved economic returns from agribusiness (including agroforestry) will come from multi-disciplinary training which embraces technological changes in all sectors of the economy including IT, finance, health, food and fibre processing and many others. This will entail a whole new approach to the future training needs of agriculture and agribusiness.

c) changes in supply chains and distribution of farm produce

Many of the new industries in agriculture and the growth of the corporate farming sector has come about because of their ability to exploit the highly profitable components of the supply chain. The larger producers are able to leverage exclusive marketing arrangements with the supermarket chains and major processors which enables them to grow more than smaller family run enterprises. The larger operators often end up being the consolidator and packager of products for smaller producers and are thus able to value-add and increase unit returns. This also enables the larger operators to employ salaried operators with specific skills and attributes which are not easily replicated by their competitors. While this trend may be lamented it must be accepted as continuing and expanding therefore the training needs will need to embrace this dynamic.

While the growth of the larger corporate operators concentrates wealth it also improves productivity and efficiency. As such the supermarket chains and processors will tend to favour the larger more efficient suppliers and these in-turn will be able to increase market access in overseas markets which would not normally be available to smaller producers. Overall, this will increase the returns to the agricultural sector and opportunities for employment – albeit differently structured with the need for a broader range of skills particularly in areas such as logistics, storage, export marketing and the like.

d) changes in consumer demand—for example, end-to-end supply chain traceability as a development of the ‘clean and green’ brand, provenance and the use of more plant-based ingredients?

Many of the changes in supply chains reflect consumer preference changes for more ethical and healthier agricultural and land based products. Packaging with less plastic, replaced with paper, cellulose, corn based, and composite materials is growing rapidly. In many cases the two industries can be marketed simultaneously such as branding zero carbon agricultural commodities and production systems. Logistics chains can be shortened, packaging rationalised and branded for marketing advantage.

In all these examples, there is a clear need for more sophisticated training with greater connection to the needs of a changing society and our global markets. For instance, there is a need for greater gender and ethnic diversity in employment and training to embrace and respond to these changes. An ageing demographic with smaller household size needs different food, packaging and accommodation compared with younger generations. As a result, there is a greater need for people who have this understanding and can respond to these changes. This will require changes to the training and education requirements of industry, government and the individual seeking new employment opportunities.

- 2) What will be the effect if agriculture continues to trend towards supplying up-market, premium, and high quality produce, with increasing value-adding manufacturing?

Because of its small market size the challenge for Australia is to find more overseas markets and this it has been able to do for premium and high quality produce. Tasmania is a leading example of this where it is able to market world best quality produce. For instance, it markets the highest value cherries and crayfish into the Japanese and Chinese market at premium prices that it would not be able to achieve domestically even without the freight costs included. On the other hand it is also able to offer premium and niche products to the restaurant trade in Tasmania which is a tourist attraction in its own right.

The forestry sector in Tasmania is somewhat different in that most of the exported product is only partially processed in high volumes for further manufacturing in Australia and overseas. The demand for sawn timber is highly competitive with a small domestic market particularly in Tasmania and much of the processed product comes from overseas – often using Australian raw materials. This is not desirable from a self-sufficiency and value-adding perspective and is also inefficient. It has also meant that the industry has become dependent on a somewhat fickle international market for the raw material. If more product were processed in Australia this would insulate the industry from some of these fluctuations because it would incorporate more of Australian product within the value chain and capture higher returns found in the final product. To foster this change to further processing in the forestry and timber industries it is thought that greater investment from industry and government will be needed together with training for a workforce which can maintain this industry. Paradoxically this training may need to be in low-labour technology such as robotics to reduce the high labour cost inherent in the Australian economy. This is true of agriculture generally but is probably even more true in the forestry sector.

- 3) What impact will climate change and other environmental situations such as severe droughts, severe storms and long fire seasons have on the agricultural workforce?

Climate change is a growth mandate for the forest sector. The challenge for the forest sector is servicing demand, rather than encouraging demand.

Workforce skills founded on risk management, resilience, and natural capital accounting are core gaps in the arena of change management.

Climate change enhances the 'seasonality' of the forest sector and in turn influences heightened peaks and troughs in labour demand, particularly at the grass roots level.

- 4) What ways might changing social perceptions of different agricultural activities (for example, perceptions about sustainability, emissions, and animal welfare) affect the agricultural industry and its workforce?

The forest sector is a wealth creating primary industry with a reinforced position as an 'essential service' in recent COVID-19 times. Forestry is a solution to contemporary climate related challenges in agriculture and land management. The challenge today is recruiting the right marketing skills to obtain recognition broadly as to forestry's credentials.

From the perspective of smaller private forest growers, there is chronic gap in the training available for farm forestry skills and education in Australia and Tasmania. While there are courses available in forestry and forest management this is often not appropriate or relevant to the farm forester. This has remained a training need in Australia for many years and training institutions are only just beginning to realise that trees are no different from other agricultural crops. Many of the needed farm forestry skills relate more to agribusiness and marketing than specialist forest agronomy or silviculture. The example of the Horticulture Masterclass referred to on page 14 of the Discussion Paper would be a good prototype for this type of training for this sector. This would give students and new generation farmers the ability to incorporate trees in their farming operation for mutual productive benefit with existing activities. It would include training in the basic skills needed to manage any business including how end products (such as timber) could be marketed for maximum return.

- 5) What impact will societal changes, such as the ageing workforce, low unemployment, low immigration and relocation of regional population (and agricultural, health and education workers) to urban areas, have on the agricultural workforce?

Reliable entry level labour at scale is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain in regional areas, particularly for outdoor tasks that include manual handling, such as tree planting.

The aging workforce also represents risks in specialist occupations such as truck driving where the task has inherent risks that magnify with age, and there is a lack of younger recruits with appropriate skills.

In addition, upper level management and leadership are recognised industry gaps, particularly with respect to resilience and crisis leadership (refer to FWPA below).

Existing Solutions - Examples:

Building Our Future Through Leadership – Forest and Wood Products Australian (FWPA) -
<https://www.fwpa.com.au/forwood-newsletters/1737-building-our-future-through-leadership.html>

For Our Future — Regional & Collaborative Leadership Program, is an intensive, experiential program, which aims to develop tomorrow's leaders in the forestry and wood industries.

The training is delivered in partnership with the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation and Polykala, an organisation that focuses on developing leaders in sectors facing complex challenges or change.

TSDS Funding - <https://forestworks.com.au/2018/03/06/tasmanian-training-skills-development-service-tsds-program-extension/>

TSDS Funding Report - <https://forestworks.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/TSDS-Progress-Report-July-2020-Compressed.pdf>.

The TSDS program aims to enable current, new and potential forestry employees to undertake training and skills development to match their vocational skills to changing job requirements due to the restructuring of the forestry industry. The program allows for the recognition of existing skills in the industry and workforce development planning.

Cadet Forester Traineeship - http://taen.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Cadet-Forester-Brochure-April-2018_LR.pdf

Cadet Forester program has been developed to overcome the shortfall of professional foresters currently needed to work in Tasmania's forest industry. Trainees can commence on an Australian School Based Apprenticeship for year 11 & 12 students, or an adult traineeship for all other applicants. Trainees will be directly employed by individual organisations, or by a group training organisation for shared work placements.

New Zealand Forestry Workforce Action Plan 2020 - 2024 -
<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/40366-forestry-wood-processing-workforce-action-plan-proof10final24jan2020>

The objective of the Plan is to enable the development of a skilled, safe and diverse workforce that meets the current and future needs of the sector. It focuses on the 4 key areas outlined below.

- 1. Knowledge - We will have the information and enabling systems required to develop and evaluate forestry and wood processing workforce development initiatives*
- 2. Attraction - We will strengthen support for initiatives that attract a larger, more diverse workforce into forestry and wood processing training and employment.*

3. *Education and training - We will help shape the education and training system to produce sufficient learners and workers with the skills required to succeed in forestry and wood processing careers.*
4. *Employment - We will encourage improvements in workplace employment practices that attract, develop and retain a skilled, safe and productive workforce.*

a) Are there other societal changes that will affect the agricultural industry and its workforce?

One of the major changes that is occurring in the horticultural sector is the recruitment of overseas backpacker and itinerant workforce. This is also occurring in the packaging and logistics chain for low-paid manual labour. This workforce often has poor education and English language skills. It means that farm and related value-chain industries need a different set of skills to manage and accommodate this workforce. Larger organisations have their own training schemes to help manage this workforce but smaller operators may be challenged with this dynamic. New targeted support measures and training will be needed if the full potential of the agriculture and forestry sector is to be realised especially in a post-COVID world.

6) What impact does the continuing international corporatisation of agriculture have on labour and jobs?

Forest ownership is transitioning from public and ASX ownership to that of Timber Investment Management Organisations (TIMOs). These TIMO's bring with them heightened standards relating to governance, safety performance and environmental performance.

All future engagement of human resources will include heightened standards and controls on training and competency, compliance and ethics.

Future workforces are likely to include improved performance metrics relating to gender and cultural diversity.

7) What are key health and wellbeing considerations for the agricultural workforce?

a) How can health and wellbeing best be maintained and improved?

The forest sector employs a diverse community of workers including sectors of our community challenged by language, reading and writing literacy. The industry needs to accommodate these factors in the development of training, such as delivery of material that is flexible and applied. It is important that low literacy is not seen as a barrier for entry, or a barrier for training.

The forest sector acknowledges the importance of mental health as an emerging issue. Early efforts must be maintained and enhanced to ensure a future workforce approaches these challenges and opportunities in a contemporary way, including mental health plans for workforces and individual workers.

Existing Solutions - Examples:

TFFPN – COVID-19 Mental Health and Well-being Videos - <https://www.tffpn.com.au/>

A series of locally produced videos were produced during the COVID-19 lockdown in Tasmania and distributed through industry networks and social media. These short videos were a great demonstration of workers caring for co-workers. Feedback from this process in acknowledging mental health and well-being has been very positive.

Chapter 3

- 8) What are the key drivers that will influence the size and skill needs of the agricultural workforce in the next decade?

Contemporary workforces are interested in more flexibility, more diversity in conditions, and this is exacerbated by experiences during COVID-19. Workplaces need to recognise this to ensure they are attracting the best talent.

It is recognised that the application of big data and technology will bring opportunities for automation and efficiency. The future workforce will produce more output with less resources, and it is anticipated that the future workforce will universally require technological literacy.

The corporatisation of the forests sector will also demand higher performance relating to safety and governance.

The agricultural sector shares many of these change stresses, and ultimately there will be a level of competition between the two sectors, also providing opportunities for collaboration that deliver efficiencies.

- 9) What factors (e.g. status of the agricultural industry compared to other industries, competitive labour market, workplace conditions, public perceptions of agricultural jobs and industries) impact the pool of talent available to pursue agricultural careers?

The forest industry shares a common perception with agriculture that jobs in these sectors are ‘dumb, dirty and dangerous’. Conversely, industry leaders recognise the sector as providing (i) work that is meaningful, (ii) work that is flexible with pathways, (iii) work that is ongoing, and (iv) work that can weather storms such as COVID-19.

- a) How can these factors be mitigated?

It is recognised that human beings begin to develop their sense of values and place during their formative years in late primary school education. Realigning students during their later secondary schooling is often too late and as a result the reward for effort is limited.

Forestry and agriculture must be incorporated into the primary and secondary school curriculum to ensure appropriate linkages with learning and opportunity.

Existing Solutions - Examples:

Forest Education Foundation - <http://www.forest-education.com/>

The Forest Education Foundation (FEF) provides teachers and students with the opportunity to learn about forest systems and the ways in which individuals, communities and our society interact with these environments, the resources they provide and the role we play in the future of forests. This is achieved through the provision of Professional Learning for teachers, educational resources linked to the Australian Curriculum, direct engagement with students (K-12) and extensive collaboration through education and forest industry networks. The FEF is staffed by experienced and qualified teachers.

Tasmanian Agricultural Education Network - <https://taen.org.au/>

The Tasmanian Agricultural Education Network (TAEN) promotes the delivery of high-quality agricultural education in Tasmania and inspires interest in agriculture throughout the Tasmanian community. This is achieved through Professional Learning activities for teachers, support for members attending conferences and sponsorship of school agricultural activities for students. Opportunities for agricultural teachers to experience a variety of agricultural/forest industry businesses through site visits are a feature of workshops designed for teachers and to support curriculum development.

10) How can agribusinesses and related industries better attract workers?

Discussion and examples above.

a) What factors affect entry into the agricultural workforce? How can the agricultural industry achieve greater exposure?

Discussion and examples above.

b) Why do people leave the agricultural workforce? How can these factors be mitigated?

In a forestry context the retention of the workforce is reasonably strong, with the exception of those workers forced out during inevitable market fluctuations (industry downturns). In these cases, workers often transition to jobs in mining and conventional agriculture and are slow to return.

Mitigating the workforce impacts from market volatility is difficult, and likely rests with industry leaders to address supply chain shock risks and improve consistency in demand. For the factors we can control, our retention record is strong.

11) What are the implications if the supply of skilled agricultural workers is insufficient for your sector or business?

Maintaining global competitiveness is fundamental to the forestry sector's survival and prosperity. Workforce capacity is a critical element to this.

Failure to attract a workforce that keeps Australia's cost of production ahead of global competitors will result in lost economic opportunity for Australia, and arguably a loss of sustainability in the growing and processing of wood fibre globally.

Failure to attract a skilled workforce will also result missed opportunities relating to safety performance.

Chapter 4

- 12) What skills and knowledge does the agricultural workforce need in the foreseeable future to ensure the ongoing productivity of the agricultural industry given the changes the industry and Australia is experiencing?

The forest sector requires a balanced, flexible, and future focused workforce with skills in;

- *Workplace Health and Safety*
- *Leadership and Management*
- *Risk Management*
- *Marketing and Communications*
- *Logistics*
- *Agronomic / Plant health*
- *Information Technology*
- *Artificial Intelligence / Big data*
- *Research and Innovation*

- 13) Is the current education and training system for agricultural workers fit for purpose? Are the needs of the agribusiness workforce adequately served by current education and training systems (high school programs, vocational education and training, and higher education)?

- a) What is working? What is not?
- b) How can these systems best meet the needs of the agricultural workforce?
- c) What changes might be required to accommodate the different learning style of younger generations of people?

The key challenge for the Tasmanian forest sector in this arena is promoting the opportunities, both with school students and also mid-career workers who contemplate professional development.

In many cases there is well developed education and training infrastructure in place, such as school programs, industry training hubs, and pathways. The gap that exists currently is a sufficient

quantum of willing students equipped with a growth mindset and an appetite to make a contribution to the sector.

Existing Solutions - Examples:

ARBRE Training Centre and Forest Education Foundation

The collaborative work of these two organisations in engaging with the Department of Education, Beacon Foundation and University of Tasmania etc to enable them to connect more fully with industry and deliver high quality career education including work exposure opportunities. This includes the promotion of the diverse range of career opportunities, providing immersive forest harvester simulator and Virtual Reality experiences to showcase potential career pathways.

Forestry Pathways Learning Program – South Australia - <https://www.timberbiz.com.au/forests-timber-pathway-program-for-mount-gambier-high-schools/>

The Ultimate Renewable Forest Learning Pathway Program provides the education and skills necessary for students to join the forest and timber industry with a Certificate III and SACE credit points.

Safe and Skilled Program – Industry Led Collaboration - <https://www.afca.asn.au/news-projects-2/safeskilled>

Two nation-wide peak body industry groups (Australian Forest Contractors Association and the Australian Forest Products Association) initiated the Safe and Skilled Program to ensure that forestry contractors have the required skills in both WHS and environmental care. The Tasmanian Forest Practices Authority collaborated with forest industry companies, forestry contractors and RTOs to develop Tasmanian contextualised training material for the level II unit in environmental care. This material will ensure that training for contractors covers the essential skills required for environmental compliance with the Tasmanian forest practices system. Collaboration between organisations has been key to achieving this outcome.

- 14) What skills and knowledge do business owners need and how can this be best achieved (formal education or informal education and different modes of delivery, for example micro-credentials, online learning, workplace learning)?

The current education system is focused on a single performance metric, the ATAR Score for the secondary school system, and a graduation certificate for the tertiary system. This is overly simplistic and fails to recognise other attributes valued by employers such as emotional intelligence, resilience and self-starting skills.

The education system is to be encouraged to consider broader evaluation systems, which will provide key information for employers to make decisions from and may also add benefits to students in evaluating their own performance.

Finally, the secondary system currently secures students until the age of 18 for those within the ATAR University pathway. It is recommended this retention until the age of 18 also apply to vocational students on non-University pathways.

Existing Solutions - Examples:

Tasmanian Aged Care Sector – Right Fit People

https://www.skills.tas.gov.au/about/the_tasmanian_workforce/industry_information_and_profiles/health_aged_and_disability_services

It is understood the Tasmanian Aged Care sector is well advanced in a recruitment strategy focused on people of the ‘Right Fit’ rather than technical qualifications. Once the ‘Right Fit’ people are installed in the sector then they are provided with the appropriate training.

Chapter 5

- 15) What initiatives have worked to raise the status of agribusiness, increase the supply of workers or increase the skills and knowledge of agricultural workers? What factors have contributed to the success of these initiatives?
- a) Specifically, are you aware of examples of collaboration between employers, education providers and regional communities? Which intermediaries supported these collaborative arrangements?

Many examples are highlighted above that raise the awareness of the forest sector with students and boost the capacity of the existing workforce. Partnerships between industry and Government, led by industry, are generally the most effective.

Existing Solutions - Examples:

Centre for Forest Value – Tasmania

<https://www.utas.edu.au/arc-forest-value/home>

The Centre for Forest Value (CFV) is an Australian Research Council supported Industrial Transformation Training Centre. Our role is to build research capacity within the forestry and wood products sector and provide evidence-based research to industry identified problems.

- 16) What existing education, training, workforce or other relevant initiatives can be leveraged to support agribusinesses workforce needs?

*Many examples are highlighted above. However, the one most worthy of reinforcement here is the Tasmanian Skills Development Service highlight in question 5 - **TSDS Funding** -*

<https://forestworks.com.au/2018/03/06/tasmanian-training-skills-development-service-tds-program-extension/>

This funding is now fully committed; however, the framework remains in place for further investment. In operation this system was recognised as significantly boosting workforce capacity by all sectors of the Tasmanian forest sector. The TSDS was particularly valued by industry because it didn't require a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) as a pre-qualification. This flexibility must be maintained.

In addition to non-accredited training, the TSDS program was able to provide significant funding for industry to undertake training based on units and qualifications from the Forest and Wood Products Training Package.

Another one of the main features of the program was the support provided to industry to understand the training options available to them to achieve their skills development goals.

Industry need to be supported in navigating and accessing the VET sector through:

- *Support to navigate and access the VET system – as outlined above.*
- *Targeted support for Registered Training Organisations that recognises the challenges faced when servicing the forest industry such as thin markets in remote and regional areas, safety requirements and access to equipment.*
- *Increased public funding to undertake training.*

- 17) How can existing government programs be improved to better support agribusinesses and related industries workforce needs?

See comment above against question 16. It is recognised that material impact can arise from continuation of this program, particularly for mid-career professional development.

- 18) How consistent across agriculture and horticulture is the need for more and targeted immigration to sustainably increase the national agriculture labour pool and support national capability and capacity building?

In a forestry context access to seasonal labour is emerging as a critical component of the workforce. This is particularly the case as conventional sources for local labour struggle to maintain the scale required by industry, particularly for tasks such as tree planting.

- 19) Will the actions taken or committed to by governments and industry address concerns about workplace exploitation given time?

The forestry is sophisticated and self-regulated against the theme of workforce exploitation. The increase in corporatisation and third party certification schemes ensures that the sector is well in front of the regulatory environment.

20) What should be done in the short (1 year), medium (2 to 3 years) and long term (5 to 10 years) to improve the productivity and resilience of the agribusiness workforce? Of these actions, what are the top 3 priorities?

The top 4 priorities for the Tasmanian forest sector include;

- *Supporting the Tasmanian forest sector with an Officer for 12 months to develop an industry led Workforce Development Plan;*
- *Supporting the existing industry led partnerships with Government outlined in this paper, including an appropriate contribution of public funds based on community and economic benefit;*
- *Engagement with the primary and secondary school curriculum to ensure forestry and agriculture is appropriately profiled within the curriculum to position these careers as attractive to young people. In addition, encourage the secondary and tertiary education sector to move beyond the single performance metric of ATAR/Graduation and focus on a broader set of workforce qualities; and*
- *Recharge funding for the Tasmanian Skills Development Service highlighted in question 5 - TSDS Funding – as a means of empowering industry led professional development for mid-career workers.*

Closing Remarks

Throughout this submission Network Members have sought to communicate workforce development as a critical growth opportunity, however many would consider workforce development as a critical growth mandate. Within this submission are many examples of initiatives that Network Members consider models for future consideration. Importantly, any workforce development process must be industry led, and the Tasmanian forest sector is sufficiently motivated to do more in this area with appropriate support.

The TFFPN and Network Members listed here are appreciative of the opportunity to provide feedback to this review and trust that the credentials outlined in the introduction position the TFFPN as a significant stakeholder in further consultation.

Kind regards

Therese Taylor
On behalf of Network Members