

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 397
Asked on Tuesday, 13 March 2007

MR HOOLIHAN asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)-

QUESTION:

What is the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries doing to address skills shortages in the primary industries sector and, in particular, what is the role of the "Skills Telegraph" collaboratively funded with the Department of Education, Training and the Arts?

ANSWER:

Queensland's primary industries face many challenges including extremes of weather, exotic pest incursions and the ever changing demands of the market place.

An accessible and skilled workforce is critical in meeting these challenges to maintain Queensland's \$11 billion primary industries.

In Queensland more than 125 000 people are employed in Queensland's food and agribusiness organisations.

The continued success for regions with a robust agribusiness sector relies on being able to source a reliable and skilled labour force that also contributes to the fabric of the community in which they live and work.

The Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries (DPI&F) has developed the Skills Telegraph as a cornerstone of the Rural Skills, Training and Labour Strategy to identify what training is needed and where. It is a key initiative of the Queensland Skills Plan, a visionary blueprint to enable Queensland's critical skills shortages to be addressed.

The Skills Telegraph is a web-based database that will allow producers throughout Queensland to log-on or call DPI&F wherever they are and have their skills shortages and training needs recorded.

Producers benefit directly by being part of the skill solutions and influencing where investment in training goes. This in turn enables them to plan with some confidence for future business development.

DPI&F will be collecting this critical information to develop a comprehensive rural industry training plan for Queensland.

The training plan will provide the Department of Education, Training and the Arts with the critical intelligence to inform the design of targeted, training resource agreements with public and private training providers accessing public funding for skilling and training.

DPI&F is proud to support a number of skilling, training and labour initiatives including School to Industry Partnerships, the proposed Gateway Schools Program, and building regional and industry capacity to develop skills formation strategies designed to maximise utilisation of community workforce. DPI&F's trial project in the fruit and vegetable industry of Bundaberg is an excellent example of a blueprint for further rollout.

The Queensland Government is also working in partnership with the Australian Government in supporting the delivery of FarmBis' subsidies for management level training.

DPI&F's commitment to building a skilled workforce includes an inward look at strategies to upskill and reskill its own workforce to enable it to respond to industry and government expectations.

The new Building Future Skills Strategy looks at all points of the workforce continuum, from attracting new staff, to supporting established staff and tapping into the knowledge of those retiring.

The whole-of-government Workforce Skills Alignment Scheme is also better targeting the fit of skills and capacity by improving the match between available skills and those in demand both now and in the future.

These initiatives both within DPI&F's own workforce and in supporting industry are providing practical help for industry to develop their strengths and protect capacity, to benefit all Queenslanders through sustainable career pathways.