

QFF MEMBERS

Australian Prawn
Farmers Association

CANEGROWERS

Cotton Australia

Growcom

Nursery & Garden
Industry Queensland

Qld Chicken Growers
Association

Qld Dairyfarmers'
Organisation

**ASSOCIATE
MEMBERS**

Queensland Chicken
Meat Council

Flower Association of
Queensland Inc.

Pork Queensland Inc.

Fitzroy Food & Fibre
Association

Pioneer Valley Water
Co-operative Limited

Central Downs
Irrigators Limited

Burdekin River
Irrigators Area
Committee

Emerging Primary
Industries Groups

- Biological Farmers
of Australia
- Queensland
Aquaculture
Industries
Federation

18th August 2011

Strategic Priorities Issues Paper 2011
Skills Queensland
PO Box 15137
CITY EAST QLD 4002
By email: info@skills.qld.gov.au

QFF has reviewed the Skills Queensland Priorities Paper and while we have not had sufficient time to canvas all our members and other associated stakeholders I believe it important to provide feedback on this important guiding document for workforce development in this state.

We acknowledge this Issues Paper is a "start point" for Skills Queensland as it goes about designing new skills and workforce development programs to meet and resolve the very significant labour market challenges before us. We have noted reference to the Skills Australia recently launched Skills for Prosperity report and the national drive to reform and revitalise the apprenticeships and vocational education and training (VET) system. The driver for this change is wide recognition that "a business as usual approach" won't deliver the workforce needed to sustain economic growth. It highlights that there will be 9.3 million job openings and 12 million additional qualifications needed by 2025 because of retirements and changes in the workplace. We strongly endorse Skills Queensland position on this reform, namely that it must be "driven by industry, but framed by the national agenda".

It is this need for "industry engagement" that we provide this feedback on the Issues Paper. In particular, we note the linkage to the Skills Queensland Strategic Investment Fund and the just launched National Workforce Development Fund where enterprises can apply (upon advice from their Industry Skills Council) directly for co-funding of priority workforce development activities. Skills Queensland has already sought Expressions of Interest for the 2011-12 Strategic Investment Fund and advised that feedback from the Issues Paper will influence investment prioritisations for 2012-13.

While we understand the need to set some initial or urgent priorities, we caution that responding to "hot spots" can only be part of the whole of economy approach needed to sustain economic growth. We particularly ask Skills Queensland to recognise the importance of rural industries and their supply chains as critical ingredients for sustainable regional development and providers of highly varied employment opportunities. To assist in such considerations QFF and our members will continue to contribute to both the state annual Rural Skills Demand Report and the national AgriFood Skills Australia Environmental Scan. We see both these processes as important to creating the "more flexible and market-oriented skills system" that Skills Queensland is designing.

It is also important in our view, to recognise that many industries are now pointing to foundation skills and competencies as the key attributes of a productive workforce. We stress the importance of “generic skills” across many industries as one means of alleviating skills and labour shortages in many “hot spots”. We acknowledge that the challenges of meeting the labour and skills requirements of the resources sector and suggest that partnerships across generic skills for mining, gas, farming, construction and transport industries may provide some of the solution that regional businesses urgently need.

Having said that, QFF broadly agrees with the four priorities identified in the Issues Paper. We especially note the proposal for “improved workforce planning at an enterprise, regional and industry level” as the means for creating a more responsive skills delivery system. QFF will do its bit to see if explicit workforce development and planning tools (the ‘enterprise approach’) can deliver what is required of the education and training industries into the future.

Aside from the usual avenues for providing advice about training and workforce development needs noted above, QFF is happy to be involved in industry workshops and focus groups mentioned in the Issues Paper.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Galligan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dan Galligan
Chief Executive Officer