



*Submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Agricultural Education
and Training in Victoria-September 2011*

Dear Chair,

We wish to thank you for the opportunity to submit to the above inquiry. The Primary Industries Education Foundation, as the peak body for primary industries (agriculture forestry and fisheries) education in Australia, is uniquely placed to be able to provide the inquiry with information relating to your terms of reference. In particular;

Our information will be presented in two parts

- 1. Information regarding the Foundation**
- 2. Responses to Request for Information**

Information Regarding the Foundation:

Background

The Primary Industries Education Foundation is a tripartite, not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, formed through the collaboration of the Australian Government, primary industries organisations and the education sector. The Primary Industries Education Foundation's vision is for a community which values its primary industries and our mission is to be the preferred provider of credible, relevant and factual information on all matters relating to agriculture, fisheries and forestry for Australia's teachers, students and the community. The Foundation's objectives are to;

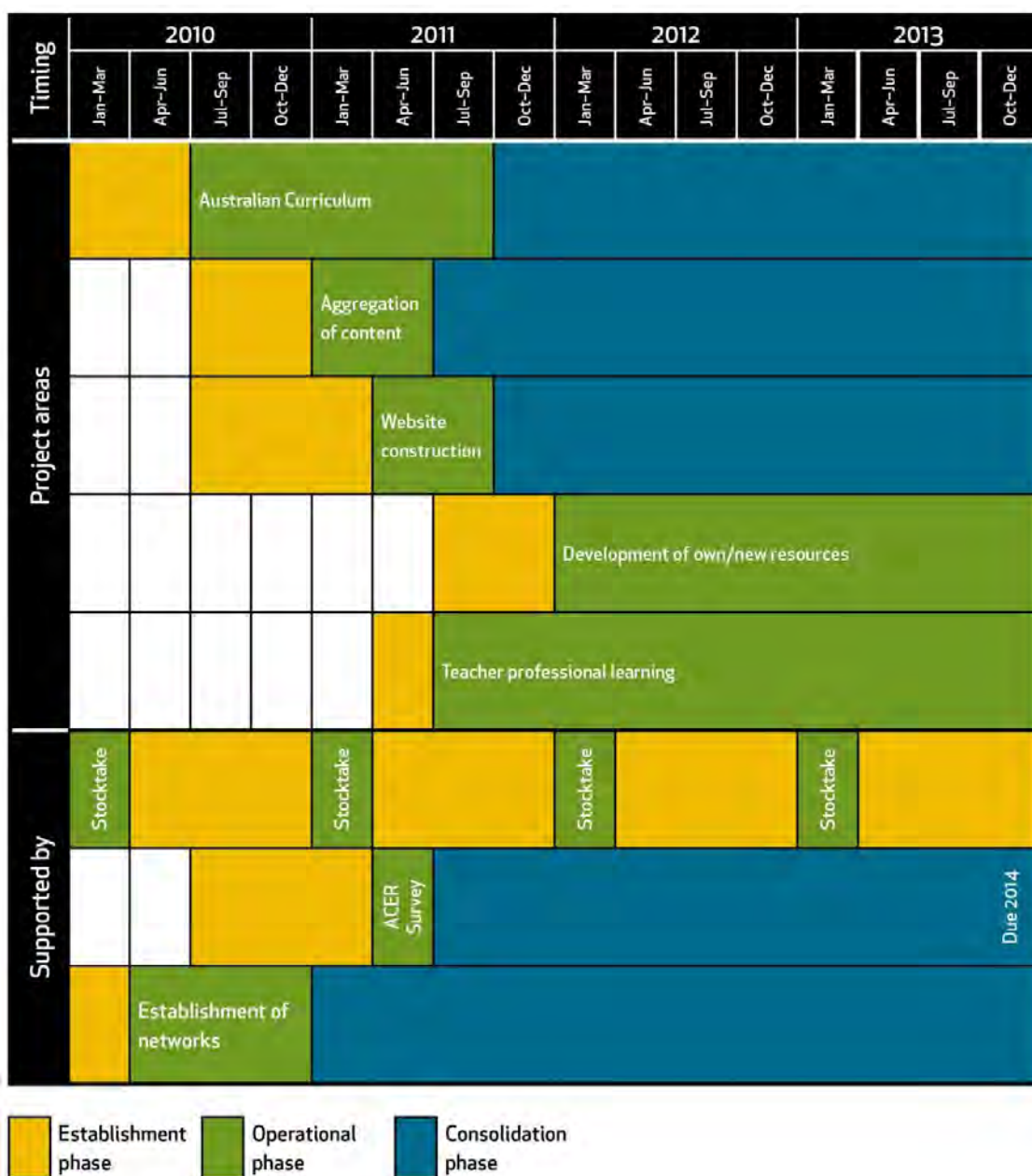
- Provide a national leadership in the coordination of initiatives to encourage primary industries education in schools through a partnership between industry, government and educators;
- Commission, coordinate, facilitate and manage national projects to encourage primary industries education in schools;
- Provide a source of credible, objective and educational resources for schools to maintain and improve community confidence in Australia's primary industries; and
- Communicate primary industries research and development outcomes in a format accessible for schools and encourage interests and skills in primary industries related careers

Foundation Activities:

The Foundation’s vision is “An Australian community that understands and values its primary industries sector.” Therefore the Foundation’s aim is to ensure that all of Australia’s 3 ½ million school students have the opportunity to learn about Australia’s primary industry sector in every year of their schooling from kindergarten to year 12.

We therefore seek to engage and educate Australia’s 252 000 teachers so that they deliver primary industries as a context across all eight learning areas as identified by the Australian Curriculum.

The Foundation has set itself numerous goals for the next three years as laid out in our Strategic Plan 2011-13 (attached). A snapshot of these activities is included in a visual below.



Key Activities

2010/11 represented the Primary Industries Education Foundation first full year of operation and is a significant milestone in the development of the peak body for primary industries education in Australia. Outlined below are the Foundation's significant achievements in 2010/11 that will lay the basis for a successful and long-term approach to the development of an Australian community which understands and supports its primary industries sector.

The activities are significant as they represent for the first time a strategic alignment between primary industries and mainstream education. The development of our relationship with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), our growing relationship with peak education bodies from around Australia, our increasing supporting from state-based departments of education and primary industries and our strategic approach has set us apart from previous initiatives. The latter has included a stocktake of activities to retain the best of the past and avoid duplication in the future, informing of the Australian Curriculum designed to raise community awareness of agriculture and associated career opportunities, the development of a one-stop web portal, facilitating national teacher professional learning and developing and expanding a national network of primary industry education supporters.

Stocktake of Existing Primary Industries Educational Activities:

An updated stocktake was completed in February 2011 that identified over 250 individual initiatives across Australia. This was uploaded to the Primary Industries Education Foundation website and was utilised by a number of teachers to access resources to support their teaching and learning programs. A process has been established to assess our member and stocktake resources in 2011/12 for 'explicit educational value' and to consolidate and refine these for uploading to our new website for schools

www.primezone.edu.au

Informing the Australian Curriculum:

The Foundation has been identified by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) as the peak body for primary industries education in Australian Schools. The head of ACARA, Robert Randall has also publicly stated that ‘primary industries have an entitlement within the Australian Curriculum.’ We continue to work with ACARA to ensure that a subject covering primary industries education will be incorporated within the learning area of ‘Technology’ due for implementation in 2014. The Foundation will also coordinate and prepare a submission to include primary industries within the cross-curricula perspective of ‘Sustainability’.

One Stop Web Portal- www.primezone.edu.au :

Work has been underway in the development of a one-stop web portal for primary industries education resources. The notion of a one-stop shop for primary industries is central to our relationship with teachers. The name ‘primezone’ has been determined as a result of feedback from focus groups. The foundation also successfully applied for an ‘edu.au’ domain name. An ‘edu’ web address provides the foundation with credibility and access to schools. The website is due for launch in late July 2011. Stage One of the goals of web development is to make as many existing resources as possible discoverable in the one spot while at the same time making their link to the Australian Curriculum explicit.

Quality Teacher Professional Learning:

To maximise the resources available to teacher’s direct professional learning is required. The Foundation continues to explore various models to deliver professional learning. A pilot professional learning day was convened with support of a number of parties in November of 2010. Approximately 75 educators gathered to determine the best way to support the implementation of a new HSC subject. The Foundation was able to use its network to attract first class speakers to directly engage with teachers. The day also resulted in the production of an evaluation report that will inform future professional learning programs.

The Development of a National Network to Support Primary Industries Education:

The Foundation has played a crucial role in identifying and connecting individuals and organisations from industry, government and education that currently or wish to, play a role in the increased teaching and learning of primary industries content in Australian schools. The Foundation held network meetings in all states of Australia that collectively attracted over 500 attendees. The meetings have added value by becoming part of a national database of primary industries education ‘champions’ and by increasing participants’ own knowledge of developments and progress in this area. The Foundation’s role is currently to connect, inform and to value-add to existing networks.

Much work has been put into creating a relationship with educational administrators and mainstream classroom teachers to ensure that we will meet their needs and that we fully understand our client base. We have strategically developed our relationship and engaged

with organisations such as the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and Education Services Australia. These are two of the most respected and well-known bodies in Australian Education. This relationship means that our resources benefit from their knowledge of the Australian schools system and that our credibility is increased through this association.

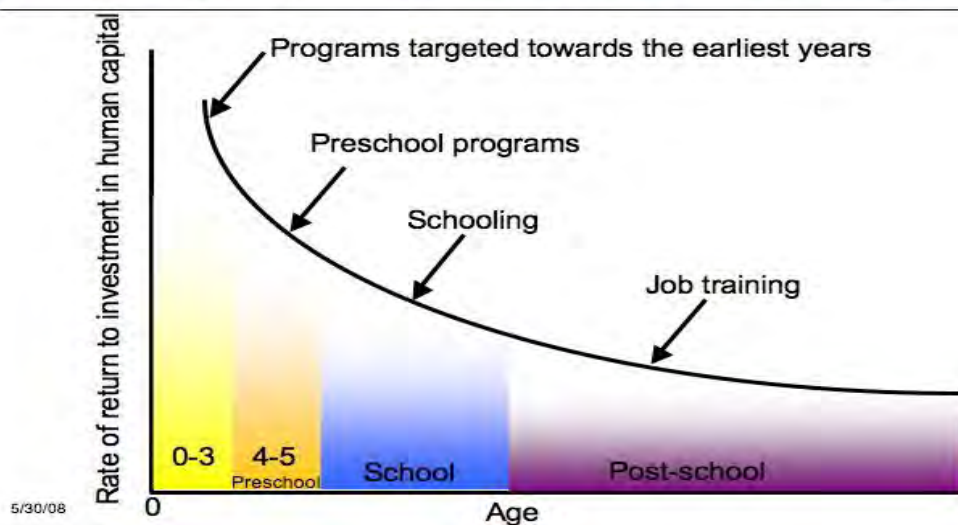
National Benchmarking Survey of Student and Teacher Knowledge:

The Foundation has commissioned the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) to undertake in the second half of 2011 a national benchmarking survey of year 6 and year 10 students and their teachers in relation to their knowledge and understanding of primary industries and the careers available. The survey will go live to schools in July 2011 and a full report will be available in October. This will initially inform our activities and as the survey will be readministered every three years it will become the main source of our monitoring and evaluation of our programs. We thank Woolworths Ltd for their financial support of this endeavour. We look forward to sharing the results of this survey with the committee once completed.

Australia's primary industry sector is responsible for employing approximately 6% of Australia's population directly. This, therefore, leaves 94% of Australia's population with little or no understanding of how there are feed, clothed or housed. The purpose of the Foundation's approach in educating all students, not just those who are seeking a career in the sector is two-fold. Firstly every student will leave year 12 understanding from where their food and fibre originates, how it is produced and how it reaches the consumer. Secondly by being exposed to accurate and balanced teaching and learning materials from early in their school life logic dictates that the number of students who would then go on to seek a career in the sector would also increase and that there would also be a more diverse pool of students seeking a career. It is this diversity that will be crucial if we are to face the challenges predicted over the next 50 years.

The commencement of our educational activities and the continuation of these through to year 12 are based upon a solid body of research that illustrates the economic benefit of commencing early. Most notably has been the work of Nobel winning economist, James Heckman. He has published data that quantifies the economic return on every additional dollar invested at varying stages of schooling.

Figure 9: Rates of Return to Human Capital Investment at Different Ages: Return to an Extra Dollar at Various Ages



'Heckman Curve'-James Heckman. Source: <http://www.heckmanequation.org/>

Future Plans:

We plan to continue our work in identifying and evaluating current resources and activities between know and the end of the year, reference these to the Australian curriculum and make them discoverable in the one place-primezone.

Once completed, we will work with ACARA to identify the gaps in our own resources and the Australian curriculum to develop our own cross industry and cross-curricula resources at each learning stage from K-12.

Responses to Requests for Information:

- **Key benefits and issues surrounding agricultural education and training courses.**
 - The Foundation would argue that the definition should be broadened to the title of Primary Industries Education and include agricultural, forestry and fisheries education. A key issue is that the seafood and timber industries are often neglected from attention in relation to this area.
 - From an educational point of view the context of the primary industries
- **The role and effectiveness of the primary industry sectors current involvement.**
 - Prior to the establishment of the Foundation industry reach into the education sector has been largely unsuccessful. This is for a number of reasons.

- Most resources were promotional, pushing what the industry wanted students to know rather than what teachers wanted to teach;
- They lacked any educator support and therefore ended up in the bin or gathering dust on a library shelf;
- They failed to differentiate the different learning stages and year levels of students – one size fits all;
- Teachers had to work hard to find a way to incorporate them into their teaching program;
- Teachers themselves knew very little about each industry and therefore didn't feel confident in the topic;
- They weren't linked to the syllabus;
- They were poorly marketed to teachers (mainly not at all);
- Teachers just aren't hanging out for this stuff;
 - Teachers don't care about the beef industry, or the egg industry, or the dairy industry, or the grains industry. They do care about where food comes from, food security, environment, animal welfare, nutrition, food skills, etc.
- Some individual industries has been prepared to break down their 'silo's' more quickly than others, however some still view investment in education as a marketing exercise and seek to maintain their individual brand.
- Despite early success, industry is currently not providing sufficient financial support to ensure the Foundation can deliver on its potential.
- **How to improve public perceptions around pursuing a career in the primary industries.**
 - The primary industries sector provides an exceptionally broad range of careers. Many of these are high-tech, innovative and require significant qualifications.
 - However most students perceptions are either ill-informed, gained from the media or are discouraged by parents to undertake a career in the sector.
 - Our ACER benchmarking survey asks year 10's and their teachers about their perceptions and knowledge of careers within the primary industries sector. The results will provide greater data to inform this area.
 - The Foundation's approach is to encourage the sequential inclusion of primary industries as a context from Kindergarten to year 12. The repeated presentation of those employed within the sectors as intelligent, qualified, environmental custodians will break down current perceptions.
- **An Overview of other well regarded primary industry education in other Australian States and Territories.**

- As stated previously our national stock take of resources lists over 250 separate initiatives. The first 60 of these are listed on the www.primezone.edu.au website.
- <http://www.primaryindustrieseducation.com.au/stocktake.htm>
- We are currently undertaking an educational audit of the value of each of these initiatives and will be able to report back to the committee later in the year.
- Of note however, are the following resources or activities continually referred to us by our network of educators.
 - Tocal Agricultural Centre
 - A post schooling training facility <http://www.tocal.nsw.edu.au>
 - The Western Australian Agricultural Colleges
 - Seven 11-12 colleges administered as a separate educational district- <http://www.harveyag.wa.edu.au>
 - LandLearn NSW and LandLearn Victoria
 - Both a wonderful portal for resources and expert advice.
 - Virtual Farm
 - A high tech tour of sheep and cattle properties in Australia, all linked to the curriculum- <http://virtualfarm.mla.com.au>
 - Forest Learning Website
 - A great range of resources with a sustainability focus- <http://www.forestlearning.edu.au>
 - International, Farm and Country Side Education (FACE UK) is a model for a central portal.
 - <http://www.face-online.org.uk>
 - The Canadian Agriculture to the Classroom website is another well developed initiative.
 - <http://www.aitc.ca>

Again, we thank the committee for the opportunity to have input into the inquiry and welcome the chance to share further information as we further examine existing resources and receive the full report of our national benchmarking survey in late October.

Yours Sincerely,



Ben Stockwin,

Executive Manager

30/09/11