



13 September 2017

## POSITION STATEMENT - GROWING APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS

The Wheatbelt Business Network is the region's largest business association and aims to connect businesses and grow the Wheatbelt.

The benefits of supporting employers, trainees and apprentices in rural communities in the Wheatbelt cannot be underestimated. Rural businesses can remain viable and successful, employment prospects are supported and rural communities have the capacity to grow.

**The WBN encourages businesses to employ trainees and apprentices but welcomes some assistance to both employers and employees to encourage the uptake of such training opportunities.**

**We strongly support the importance of people undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships in the Wheatbelt.**

### HOW CAN WE MAKE APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS MORE ATTRACTIVE TO YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES?

Apprenticeships and traineeships are important ways in which people living in rural areas of Western Australia can gain skills whilst being employed, leading to successful careers in the region. In turn local rural businesses and communities are supported with a retention of the population and a larger labour pool.

The difficulty associated with dealing with multiple agencies is a hindrance to apprentices, trainees and employers alike. Reducing the complexity and finding ways to streamline administrative processes and provide effective support would be welcomed - one member recently dealt with four different government agencies (approvals, forms etc) to put on one trainee.

Young people from the Wheatbelt often need to complete block training in Perth and have difficulty in finding accommodation that is cheap, available and close to their training - it needs to be affordable on their apprentice / trainee wage. Employers often cover the cost of the accommodation for their apprentices and trainees. Can training be delivered in the regions or can an accommodation subsidy be introduced?

Rural businesses are often small and apprentices and trainees are likely to be paid the minimum award rate. Low pays are a disincentive for people considering undertaking training opportunities and increasing wages is likewise a disincentive for employers. The attractiveness of doing an apprenticeship or traineeship needs to be improved if wages can not be increased.



Connecting business. Growing the Wheatbelt.

[www.wheatbeltbusinessnetwork.com.au](http://www.wheatbeltbusinessnetwork.com.au)

**WHAT BARRIERS OR IMPEDIMENTS PREVENT EMPLOYERS FROM TAKING ON AN APPRENTICE OR TRAINEE UNDER A CONTRACT OF TRAINING IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA?**

There is considerable confusion amongst employers of what group training providers offer, what TAFE offers and also the Apprenticeship Office - some employers still refer to the Apprenticeship Board, Apprenticentre etc. Small business owners are often busy working in their business, not on it and don't have time to understand what each offers. We have found most of our members are confused with who to contact and how the system operates - unless they have been involved in it for a long time.

Encouraging more older people to undertake training opportunities (and making it an attractive option at their particular stage in life), business owners would have a larger pool of people to select from, and increase the likelihood of getting someone who is the "right fit" for them. This is particularly relevant in the Wheatbelt where we have an ageing population and diminishing labour pool.

Agricultural traineeships have a very low uptake and one major impediment faced by agricultural enterprises is ensuring high levels of supervision. Adequate and flexible training options that are tailored to participants in rural areas should be supported. Alterations to the current recommendations could include block training arrangements and web based training.

There is also the entrenched mindset in some of our members that when you take on an apprentice or trainee, you invest a lot of time in them only to see them move into more attractive industries / pay conditions immediately after they complete their training - no matter what package or workplace conditions you offer (not necessarily monetary based). This was particularly evident when the "mining boom" was occurring - a number of apprentice heavy diesel mechanics working in the agricultural industry finished their training and went onto the mines immediately. This has slowed down in recent times.

Additionally, the Committee has also discussed why we have multiple TAFE "businesses" e.g. Central TAFE, North Metropolitan TAFE - all with separate Boards, but basically delivering the same service. Is there an opportunity for all the "separate businesses" to come under the one TAFE banner, under one Board and offer ALL the courses, with specialities at various campus sites.

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